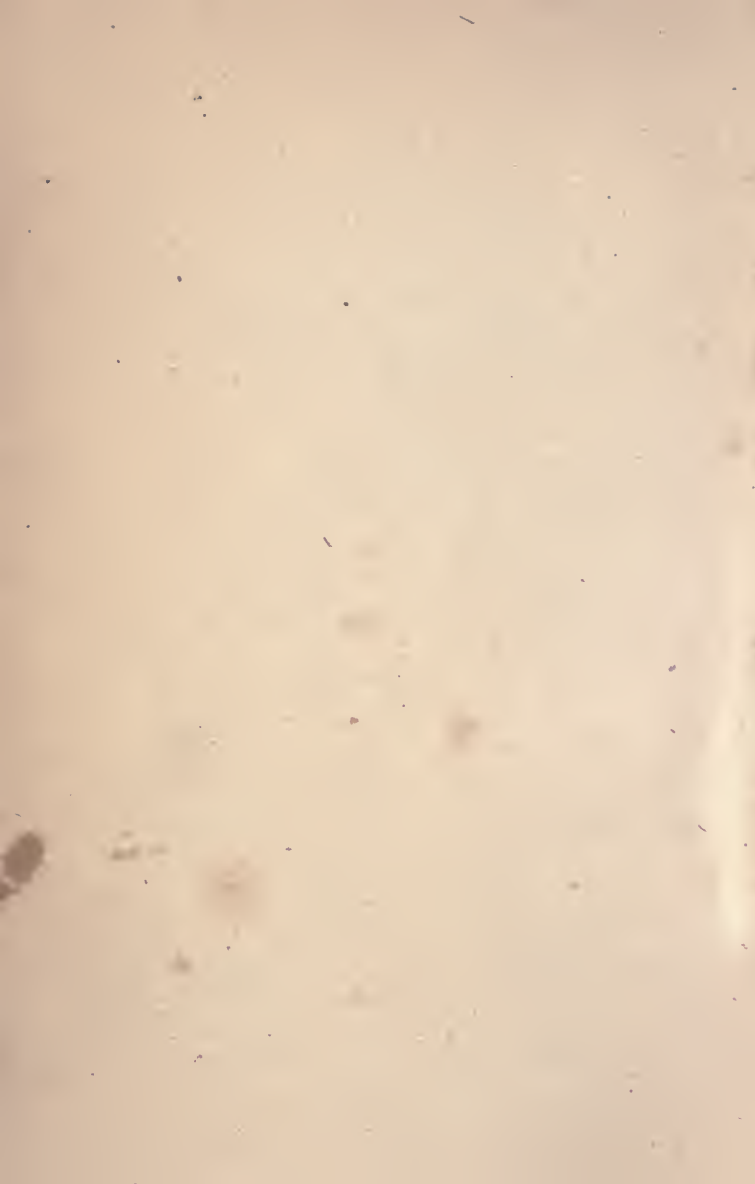


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NEW NOVELS
BY
MANSFIELD TRACY WALWORTH.

- I. — WARWICK.
II. — HOTSPUR.
III. — LULU.
IV. — STORMCLIFF.
V. — DELAPLAINE. (*Just Published.*)
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STORMCLIFF.

A Tale of

THE HIGHLANDS.

BY

MANSFIELD T. WALWORTH,

AUTHOR OF "HOTSPUR," "LULU," ETC.



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This Book

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO

JAMES LORIMER GRAHAM, Jr.,

THE WARM FRIEND AND PATRON OF THE

AUTHORS, ARTISTS, AND LITERARY MEN OF THE METROPOLIS,

BY HIS FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

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STORMCLIFF.

CHAPTER I.

AGAINST a cliff of the highlands of the Hudson a man was clinging. He had paused in his arduous ascent of the mountain to rest, and now clung, panting and trembling from exertion, to the face of the rock, with his hands clutched firmly about a bush which grew from a crevice. He had a foothold in the rocky wall for one foot only. If the roots of the frail bush should yield to his weight, and draw out from the crevice, he would fall a thousand feet—into eternity. His purpose savored of madness. If he could reach the summit of that fearful wall, he would stand where mortal feet had never stood before: an empire of beauty and grandeur for the eye would be his own. He feared to look downwards over the route he had climbed. There was dizziness and ruin in the very thought. But a nobler and less hazardous view stretched away to the southward; and as his eye glanced along the mountain wall, he discovered, miles away, a bend of the Hudson, blue and calm—a sleeping lake sentinelled by the mountains.

But the bold climber cared not for the immense territory of woods and water and castellated hills beneath him. He was pausing against the cliff for rest, not scenery. He was determined to win the mountain-top before sunset, and love of the beautiful was not his motive power. At length his panting bosom became still, his heavy breathing ceased, and muscle came again to the assistance of will. The strong manly arms, which never yet had struck a blow for injustice

or wrong, reached convulsively upwards for fresh twigs and rockholds for the hands and feet. Slowly and carefully and tediously he toiled upwards, till at length from the base of the cliff he would have appeared like a pigmy to any chance wanderer in that mighty solitude of the eternal hills. When he stood at the base of the rocky wall, and raised his eyes heavenwards to calculate the chances of the daring feat, he was as attractive a picture of neat and muscular manhood as the eye ever meets outside of the artist's canvas and the sculptor's marble. But now clinging to that awful height, like a doomed soul, with his strength well-nigh exhausted, he had lost symmetry and beauty of person, and was bruised and blood-stained from his fierce grapple with the rocks. His garments were torn and dust-covered, and the heavy luxuriance of his dark hair was matted with the mosses which had brushed from the rocks, where he had nearly lost his slippery hold for ever.

The will to attain the summit of the cliff was not impaired by the severe toil of his ascent. When his hat brushed from his head, and fell away into the yawning gulf beneath him, he smiled a bitter smile, then clung by one hand, and with the other swept back from his eyes the long hair, that he might better calculate his course; then higher and more carefully he climbed with unabated earnestness and will. He knew that no other human creature had ever attempted the mad feat. He knew also that the chances of his being able to descend again with his life, were the chances only which madmen take. But a storm was raging within him, which drowned fear, and reason, and prudence; and the terrors of the ascent were to this storm as the zephyr to the tornado.

A mountain cataract, roaring and trembling in the abyss below, had sounded in his ears—a stern accompaniment to the storm in his soul. Its wild, distant music had served to distract his thoughts from his utter isolation from the society of mortals. But now that, too, had faded and died away in

the distance below, and he was alone with silence and God. Pausing again to rest, he listened, and hearing no sound save his own heavy breathing, he was conscious that the top of the cliff was near. Looking cautiously upwards, he spied the blue sky through a cleft in the upper edge of the rocky wall. The plateau on the summit of the mountain was not twenty feet distant from him. Oh, *horror!* this twenty feet of rock, up which he must climb, instead of sloping backwards from the abyss, now curved outwards over space. His body must now sway away from its perpendicular, and his head swing farther out over the awful gulf than his feet. Men at the realization of such a position have become instantly white-haired with terror. Not so this fearless climber. Detecting the favorable proximity and abundance of the shrubs growing along and under the edge of the cliff, he sprang upwards, grasped them in his hands, and by the sheer power of the muscles of his arms, raised himself from shrub to shrub slowly out towards the edge of the rock, with his feet dangling in mid-air. His hands alone prevented his falling two thousand feet down through the whistling wind. He shuddered then, and struggled desperately upwards and outwards to the edge. He caught that rocky edge in his hands, and attempted to raise his body up and over it to the plateau above. The muscles of his arms failed him, and he hung helpless and ready to fall to his terrible doom. But nature rallied her powers for the grapple with death. One mighty effort, and his body slowly raised in air, the chin approached nearer to his hands, the muscles of his arms gathered in knots near the shoulders, the chin raised above the highest edge of the cliff, the breast too passed above the rock, and with a struggle the climber drew himself over it on to the safe plateau above, and then fell exhausted and blood-stained upon the coveted goal of his fearful climbing. He was the lofty and solitary king of the highlands.

For a long time he lay stretched upon the plateau, panting and trembling. At last he raised himself upon one arm and

glanced about him. The surface of the rock was dotted with low shrubs growing from the crevices, and these sole evidences of vegetable life appeared to extend backwards over the plain for a great distance. He raised himself to a sitting posture and looked again, but the plateau appeared to have no boundary save the edge of the cliff, where his life had balanced between time and eternity. Then he turned towards the cliff, and gazed down over the magnificent reaches of mountains, and curving river, and emerald forests, and towns and hamlets, and white-winged vessels gliding towards the sea. His eye roved over the familiar church-spires of his native town, gleaming amid the mass of dark-green maple-trees, and then wandered along the majestic sweep of the Hudson, where it answered the challenge of the sentinel mountains by a haughty curve to the eastward. Noble old river! how his heart was bound to it by the memories of childhood! He had watched beside its cradle in the far north, where the airy-footed deer lave in its clear and rippling waters. He had witnessed the early struggles of its boyhood as he stood on the hill-side of Luzerne, and saw it cleave for itself a channel only twelve feet wide and *seventy* feet deep through the opposing rock. He had followed its course to the Falls of Hadley, where, in its young manhood, it moved proudly down upon the arena of real life like a young warrior leading a charge of ten thousand snow-white steeds through a mountain gorge. He had watched for a quarter of a century the battles of its ripe manhood with the opposing highlands. Aye, he had seen its open grave, where a million of men are ever present to honor its burial. In early life he had chosen that proud and successful river as his own model of action. He had anxiously observed the clouds, and the storms, and the night blackness settle down upon it, and had gloried to see it emerge brighter and more majestic than ever. He had listened to the wild winds, as they talked to it and threatened it. He had seen it grow black with rage and beam again with smiles, but ever mov-

ing onward to its purpose—a restless and increasing benefactor to the human race. Storms, and opposition, and menace were its portion; but its career was ever noble, and its name ever blessed of men.

Why had he failed in his purpose to be like his majestic model? God had given him a great soul; had placed upon his brow the crown *genius*; had whispered in his favored ear the thrilling tale of a higher sphere, whence mortals are allowed to gather lightning for their fellows through communion with and struggles towards the Deity. For his ear the leaves of the forest trees were allowed to breathe holy music, the dashing waterfall to ring with the silver cadences of the angels, and the misty atmosphere, hovering over the landscape, to grow tremulous with the fluttering wings of celestial messengers. Look at him seated upon the edge of the cliff, with an eye of fire and a heart of ice—a poor, human, noble heart frozen by despair. The scythe of Time has not yet described thirty circles above that proud young head, and yet he is bitter towards his adorable God and Creator, and he has scaled that mountain cliff to execute the bidding of a fiend; for genius and madness are step-sisters, and the chains of the one are more dangerous than the wild freedom of the other.

He sprang suddenly to his feet, refreshed and strong again, and the action revealed the fine proportions of his athletic frame. He was naturally sinewy and broad-shouldered, and gymnastic exercises had developed his figure into a perfect model of manly power and symmetry. He was nearly six feet in height, and he looked strong enough to throttle “a three-year-old bull.” The beauty of his face was marred by a very large square mouth; but when he smiled or conversed, this was forgotten in the charm of his utterance and the genial character of the ever-varying lines of fun or sweetness which played about this exaggerated feature. His cheeks were rather sunken and sallow; but his nose, though sallow too, was straight and graceful, and the per

fectly arched nostrils trembled when under excitement in a remarkable manner. But the glory of his face gleamed forth in the glances of his large grey eyes, deep set under heavy eyebrows of the same dark hue as his curling black hair. These wonderful eyes, in their depth and strange lambent brilliancy, flashed forth what the broad, beautiful forehead more calmly indicated—a *master soul*. The eyes and the symmetry of figure were the gift of his mother. The large mouth and forehead and sallow skin came from his father.

He raised his eyes anxiously towards the serene sky. A deep thought rose to them, expanded their pupils, then spread its fleet wings for the realm of the unseen beyond that sky. It was followed by another, which left lines of intense anguish quivering on his mouth. Under the influence of the last thought he walked to the cliff's edge and looked down. He shuddered and turned away, but only to execute more perfectly his dreadful purpose. He would die, but it must be a grand death. From a mountain crag, deemed inaccessible to men, he would launch forth upon air, and rush downwards to death, where none could be able to identify his crushed, frightful body. He walked away a distance of more than forty feet, then started towards the edge of the precipice upon a full run. His quick, beating footstep sounded upon the rock; the low bushes parted from his rushing figure with rustling sighs; he bounded to the precipice, and leaped wildly into the terrible embrace of a tall figure which shot up into the air on the very edge of the cliff. The shock prostrated both of them, and the suicide fell heavily upon his face over the crevice, through which he had seen the blue sky in his last climbing. He was snatched from the jaws of death by a woman.

Bewildered and shocked by the presence of human life, he gathered himself up and looked at her. She was sitting with her lower figure hidden in the crevice, and the collision with his rushing body had evidently injured her, for she gasped for breath. He strode to her side, and kneeling down, put

his arm about her. She pointed to a wider opening of the rock which had escaped his notice, hidden as it was under the clustering shrubs. He saw a vein of water trickling down the cleft in the rock, and his eyes soon detected a small brown pitcher suspended from one of the stunted shrubs. He left her, and placing the little pitcher under the trickling stream, soon collected a copious draught for her, which revived her, for she looked kindly at him and said :

“He shall give his angels charge concerning thee ; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

“Oh ! Nora,” he murmured, “why have you done this ? One second more and I should have been free. The cruel clutch on my heart of a sad life, would have been flung off for ever. I cannot live. Poverty and disappointment pursue me—I have struggled hard and well. None know it better than you. Alas ! this burning, fevered, weary heart would be at rest. There is no place in life for me. My brain burns with the longings and aspirations of a seraph. But my actions are feeble and foolish. Earth and Time have conspired against me. My manuscripts, you know them—the same I brought to you—have come back upon my hands valueless ; and, bitterest of all trials—my last hope—dear old Rockview has been stolen from me. Aye ! with forged papers and perjured witnesses, it has been wrested from me ; and now I have not one hope, one purpose, to live for. Why did you cheat the grave of its victim ?”

He paused for a moment, and then exclaimed with a sudden start of surprise :

“How, in the name of God, did you climb this mountain ?”

The woman replied by reaching forth her trembling hand for a steel-pointed staff, lying unnoticed upon the rock. By its aid she raised her tall figure slowly up out of the crevice till she stood upright upon the plateau beside him. Her eyes were undimmed by the flight of sixty winters, and were brilliantly black, searching the souls of men with the quick-

ness and accuracy of inspiration. Not a grey hair glistened in the coal-black tresses which she had carefully smoothed back under her widow's mourning hood. She was robed completely in black, and her thin withered countenance bore the hue brunette. She was known to many families of the highlands as the most faithful of nurses. To a select few among the poor she read the word of God, and directed to them the kind attentions of the charitable. Strange stories were sometimes whispered concerning the old woman, along the curves of the Hudson. The superstitious had been heard to denounce her as being too familiar with the learning of the "Lower Kingdom." These last, however, were careful not to make their statements too conspicuous, for "Old Nora Rudd" was rather a favorite among those who knew her well. She was too kind and devoted to the sick to be abused openly. But nevertheless it was impossible to look into her strange, glittering eyes, without recalling memories of the tales related in childhood of remarkable old personages who had suddenly been transformed into dazzling fairies. She was unusually tall and erect, and when she passed along the street in the moonlight, it did seem as if her glittering eyes could be recognized farther off than any other human eyes known to the community. But allowances must be made for that slight vein of the superstitious and the marvellous which ebbs and flows in all of us.

Her friends scouted the idea of her being familiar with the Evil One, and cited with rare plausibility the fact of her well known devotion to the reading of the Bible as evidence that she lived near to God. She was, moreover, a member of a Christian Church, in good standing, and her conduct uniformly pious and exemplary. Indeed, it would have been difficult to point to a single act of her mature life which savored of evil. It is true she wandered much in the woods and wild places alone, and she was not always inclined to give the public curiosity a bulletin of her daily life. To this singularity might be added another perversity—namely, an

unwillingness to talk of her life before her widowhood. She was believed to have fallen from a condition of affluence to a humbler state of life, and her conversation certainly evidenced a good education.

But the rumor regarding her which gained the widest circulation, and which occasioned among many a slight feeling of awe, was her reputed power to isolate herself from material objects for a time and hold communion with the invisible world. It was said Nora Rudd had on several occasions fallen into trances, and while in that unconscious state had prophesied with remarkable accuracy of coming events. The instance of her strange power most frequently cited was during her connection with a prominent family of the highlands. This family, of late years, had become the centre of great speculation to those who derive the principal pleasure of life from inquiries and investigations into the affairs of their neighbors. Several mysterious occurrences had rendered the Traver family notorious. Grace Traver, a raven-haired beauty of fifteen, and the only daughter, had been hurried into a marriage with an old gentleman of sixty, named Baltimore, and with equal and indecent haste had been carried away to Europe, where she was said to be living very unhappily from want of congeniality with this old greyhead. She had been gone nearly six years. Her brother Walter, an undergraduate of Harvard, had recently been crippled for life by a fall from his horse. Her father, Nicholas Traver, the most elegant and cultivated gentleman of his county, had abandoned society immediately after his daughter's singular marriage, and was now seldom seen among men. He was reputed to have been a superb horseman, and it was whispered about that his principal exercise now was taken upon horseback in the most unfrequented localities and upon the wildest mountain roads. Another rumor ascribed to him a peculiar sensitiveness in regard to being seen during the summer months. He had been seen upon his famous stallion, Tornado, in the springtime and in October, bounding away

amid the highland solitudes. For six years he had been seen on horseback, and in nearly every month of the year; but never, it was asserted, would he ride in the summer months or in September. Rumor said he was restrained at those periods by some deadly terror. His fine country-seat had been the ideal of elegant hospitality; now it was a secluded retreat for himself and his crippled son. A vague terror had become associated with the name of Traver; and if there was a reason for it originally, the secret was well maintained by the few who shared it. Curiosity, indeed, had time and again hovered around the impenetrable inclosure which divided Nicholas Traver's property from the public highway. It was in vain. Curiosity received a cold shoulder from the few and reserved servants of the mysterious family.

Nora Rudd knew everything concerning that family. *Everybody* said it, and who shall dispute what *everybody* asserts. That remarkable personage, *everybody*, has blasted character, tormented innocence, made black white, and caused water to run up hill, besides accomplishing a thousand equally difficult feats which have rendered its name immortal. Live that immaculate Court of Appeals, *Everybody!* Well: Nora Rudd had lived with, and nursed and protected Grace Traver from infancy. She had watched the little fairy, when her exquisite black eyes opened upon this beautiful world for the first time. She first taught the little baby brunette to curl her forefinger in the effort to point heavenward and lisp the name of "God." She closed the eyes of that baby's mother, and followed her to a Christian burial. She taught that motherless child, that to be lovely in character, and faithful to friends, is a richer gift than empire. And when that child looked forth through the uncertain mask of fifteen, the old nurse began to cherish the fond hope that she would be beautiful in a year or two more.

But one stormy night, when the mountain spirits came down to threaten the Hudson, and the old river was fairly boiling with rage, old Nora was refused admittance to see her darling.

She suspected something was wrong, and she crouched down by the high paling to wait, and watch, and listen in the pitiless rain till morning. In a trance a few weeks before, she had prophesied (so her friends told her) that certain misfortunes would come upon the Traver family. What her friends told her made her very uneasy. Hence her visit on the night of the terrible whirlwind. While she crouched by the paling in the storm, a carriage rolled out through the gate, and despite her frantic efforts to arrest its hurrying wheels, passed on into the darkness and was gone.

They allowed her to enter the premises then, for her darling was gone forever. She was too late to save her, but she reached the Traver mansion in time to hear, amid the howlings of the storm, and amid the glancing lights of the deserted marriage-feast, something which haunted her like the shriek of a lost soul. She heard the last fearful words which reason left upon a mother's lips, ere he resigned his sceptre. She heard a high-born, noble Christian lady utter a curse which ran along the veins of the listeners like electric ice. Oh! that wounded mother's terrible curse—that last, long howl of the tigress stripped of her young!

Quiet was restored, as becomes a gentleman's mansion, and the poor lunatic lady was placed in a safe asylum, and the matter was hushed. Years rolled by; summer sunshine and winter darkness came and fled. The birds sang in their season, and the Traver estate grew more luxuriant in foliage; but quiet reigned, and superstition whispered and called it gloom. It was rumored, however, that storms were more awful on that estate than elsewhere. That the winds roared louder, and the gale whistled more shrilly through its woods and over its meadows, than elsewhere in the highlands. It was noticed that the lightning fell oftener into its graceful trees and shattered their branches. And a stranger story still was told of a human voice, that travelled in dark nights on the bosom of the howling wind, when it passed over Nicholas Traver's mansion, and that the burden of its wail

was, "Be ever ready to meet thy God." But this last was whispered among the ignorant and the low, and *everybody* knows how many silly things *they* will believe.

Such, then, were the reputed trances of Nora Rudd; such were the stories told to clothe the tall dark woman with mystery as she grew old amid the highlands, but never wore the silver crown of age.

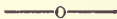
As she leaned upon her steel-pointed staff, she answered the athlete's startled question thus:

"Clarence Holden, I have saved your life, but you owe me no thanks. You saved dear little Maggie once from a watery grave. You courted death to save her, but I have run no risk to save you. I have only stretched forth my arms to prevent you flinging away God's precious gift. You know how dear to me you have always been from childhood. I believe I could hazard much to save one of your race. You are indeed alone; you *have* struggled nobly—you shall yet win. Is it nothing to you that your poor old nurse loves the very ground on which you tread? Is it nothing to you that these aged arms, which cradled your infancy, are always yearning to clasp your noble head and your generous heart to her own? What would poor old Nora have to live for when you and Grace are both gone from her? Did you forget *me* when you said there was nothing for you to live for? Live for me; live for Nora, who worships your intellect—who knows what the world shall yet acknowledge in you. Live for the sake of the old woman. You will never find a warmer heart than mine, unless you learn to lean on the heart of Jesus, the adorable. Oh, boy! if you knew what a well of love is in my old heart for you, you would never have attempted this. To-day you have scaled the inaccessible—I have only walked up a crevice of the mountain, and down that hidden way you shall walk with me. I will aid you—I will fight for you—I will pray for you—you shall win. I conjure you by the memory of your holy mother's grave, by the memory of your noble

father's deeds, by the thought of all that elevates the soul above the brute, to make one more effort, one mighty effort, to win your crown among men and your crown among the angels! Hark! the wind is rising; the spirits of the mountain talk together. The inaccessible has been conquered. The highlands acknowledge a new king, and a storm shall honor his coming. Gather, powers of the darkness—gather, lightnings and tempests—to honor the coming of one whose name shall ring from crag to crag, from emerald hill to foaming cataract, from rushing river to roaring sea! Farewell, brave boy, the spirit of the eternal hills shall talk with thee!”

He looked at her in surprise, but she knew him no longer. Her eyes were fixed upon the western sky, where the last beams of the setting sun faded away in deepening purple. She was ghastly as a corpse, and her stony gaze was the filmy stare of the dead.

A sullen roar of distant thunder was audible, and a flash lighted the gathering gloom.



CHAPTER II.

THE pall drooped lower over the departed day. It deepened the green foliage of the mountain sides and darkened the bosom of the broad river. The towns and hamlets slowly disappeared, the sails of the vessels grew sombre and then faded away into the valley of darkness which formed between the hills. Then the outlines of the sentinel mountains died away against the sky, and all was gloom. The day was no more, and the wind moaned over its bier. Over the lost river hurried the wild mourner, and the hidden forests responded to its wail. From that fathomless abyss which yawned at the cliff's edge rose strange, far-off sounds of the agonized trees in death-grapple with the unseen foe. Wilder

and fiercer waxed the struggle. The reserve forces of the storm gathered to the tops of the mountains, and with piercing yells leaped from the crags down upon the dusky battlefield. The artillery of the clouds moved to commanding positions, and dazzling bolts of livid fire fell far down into the depths of the forests, and the monarchs of the glens were riven asunder with reports which shook the shrouded hills.

At length the violence of the storm passed by. The rain ceased to fall, the wind lulled away into silence, and the electric death moved off to other battle-fields. But the broad sheets of startling fire continued still to light the mountain crag from the distance. Every clinging bush was revealed; and the profile of the mountains sprang to life with every flash. Motionless upon the cliff, was revealed the tall figure of the prophetess, trance-bound and ghastly pale, and sternly looking westward as before. Her hands clung to her long staff, whose steel point gleamed fearfully in the dangerous light. At her feet crouched the rescued suicide, trembling and awe-struck at the passing anger of an offended God, but gazing upwards into those strange dark eyes which seemed to commune with the Deity in his behalf.

When the storm came sweeping along the mountain wall, he had fallen to his knees, and with clasped hands watched her countenance for a sign of her reputed power. Once only had his gaze been withdrawn, when the lightning fell into the midst of his own native town far below him. The nearness of the falling bolt had almost blinded him as it passed, but he turned again to the countenance of Nora. When the mutterings of the thunder grew faint in the distance, and the pale light only glimmered near, he saw a shudder pass over her, and her lips murmured inaudibly. He watched her then with beating heart, and some strange instinct told him that the appointed time of his message from the unseen was near. He waited until the lightning passed away, and her face was lost in the darkness. But, by-and-by, a star looked down timidly upon the scene; then, seeing no danger or vio-

lence near, it boldly revealed itself. Another and another still gleamed forth upon the night, until the whole sky glimmered with the peace of God.

So far above the homes of men, so far above the graves of the loved and the lost, so much nearer to the pale holy light of the stars, so much nearer to the blue belt of ether where human imagination would locate Heaven—it seemed, indeed, an appropriate place for a kind Father to forgive a wanderer and whisper to a desolate heart “*hope*.” Ah! the maxims and the practices of men are so hard to a sensitive, finely strung nature, that the wonder is, so few faint and die by the wayside. A rude blow shivers the harp-strings, when a gentle, considerate touch would fill the air with melody. A gentle word to the struggling artist, a kind look to the poverty-stricken genius, a word of cheer to the uncrowned poet, may open to men a mine of beauty and wealth in the rich plain which lies near the city of God. These delicate harp-strings are not remote from any man’s door. They vibrate in the brain of the timid child who asks for knowledge, not for a sneer. They tremble with zeal in the soul of the scientific man who asks for aid in a purpose which shall furrow the sea with vessels. They whisper in the heart of the poet who rises oft towards his Creator’s throne. They throb with passion in the orator who would exert his latent fire upon the consciences of men. And when a man, forgetful of the maxims of society, scatters the pearls of kind words and cheer to the struggling, he wakes an echo among the hosts of Heaven, which first was heard stealing over the blue waves of Galilee from the voice of the Master.

A shudder, as from a chilly wind, passed over Nora again and she seemed to speak under the inspiration of another sphere.

“Clarence Holden, with God and the angels, success is not the test of merit. The invisible world is satisfied not with the position and wealth men gain, but with the purity and sincerity of their motives and the patient efforts of their

lives to fulfil their destiny. The measure of worldly success which shall follow upon effort is regulated by the will of God. His counsels none can fathom. He best knows to whom success should be granted in life, and for whom it should be reserved for the life to come. Let this console and strengthen you. You are doing His will, when you are *struggling* to do His will. But nerve yourself again for the mission of life. Your nature is such that an easy success would wilt your energies. An early coronation of your genius would furnish to you luxury for the gratification of the sensual in you. You shall cease to regard the sensual by the habits of self-denial. The spiritual, the intellectual, the heroic in you shall thrive on the barrens of poverty. Lift up your head. You are formed in the likeness of God. The signet of the Eternal King has marked your soul, and the royal messengers hover about you now to guide you to the inheritance. You have been flung from an earthly position of honor to the level of the poor. A brand has been marked on you by the world; that world will call it shame. But that shame is not of your making. It was fastened on you in infancy. You are no impostor. Rise—soar—wipe off the brand. Assert your manhood; live and conquer. An earthly crown of honor hovers now above you—reach upwards and take it, and in the taking jeopardize not the eternal crown of Heaven.

“Hark! the wind whistles through the cordage—the foam rises upon the plunging vessel, and the howlings of the gale answer the prayers of the trembling. Precious lives freight the barque; and one—ah! one, the dark-haired one—is there and fearless. She strains her wild eyes over the sea; she hopes when others fail; she strengthens by her words of cheer. Ah! she wins her life and home. In the widow’s garb she lands upon her native soil; many will seek her. Thy genius, well directed, may win her. Try.

“The scene changes to the highlands. The river is smoothly flowing, and the sky is blue. She is a graceful one—this second comer—and the roses flutter upon the snow of her

cheeks. Her eyes are blue, and her brown curling hair is the pride of her beautiful home. Child of genius, thy destiny is poised between the two. Triumph is thine, and in thy arms shall be folded one—thy wife.”

With a sudden start the prophetess awoke as from a dream, and with a bewildered look turned away. Clarence Holden sprang to his feet, and taking her hand in the starlight, said: “Nora, I am saved—you have dreamed and talked to me—I know that God has sent his angel—I will live for truth, for victory, and for Heaven.”

She answered, still bewildered by the darkness and the place: “I know not where I am—I know your voice—forgive me, but these dreams come on so suddenly I cannot tell where I am. Am I home in the village—no! the stars are shining there. How wet my dress is—or am I dreaming?”

He caught at her dress and saved her from the crevice where her bewildered footsteps were leading her. At his suggestion, she sat down upon the rock for a few moments, to recover her senses. He recalled her to the dreadful place and hour upon the cliff. She shuddered with cold; then, as the memory of his danger, and salvation at her hands, returned, she murmured:

“Thanks be to God! I was here in time; this is my secret retreat, where I can pray and meditate and talk with God. Oh! do not betray this spot to men; I will guide you safely down a crevice to the village. This mountain is fractured from top to bottom; but the lower approach is hidden; it is my secret; promise to me that it shall remain a secret—promise solemnly to the old woman who has saved your life.”

“Strange,” he muttered to himself; “I have wandered about this mountain for years, and no fracture could I ever find. It is singular enough that this old woman’s feet should find a path to the top, when all my climbing and wandering about this cliff have not given me the slightest clue!”

Then he said aloud:

"I promise, Nora—indeed I would promise anything to see you safe at home again. You have saved *me*, but you will suffer—your clothes are drenched with rain—but how can you find your way in the darkness?"

"I am always prepared for that," she answered. "Many, many years I have ascended to this place; and I find that the great secret is best preserved by coming here just before nightfall. I have always water at hand, as you see here in this crevice. Now, if you will exert yourself a little and grope under the bush where you found my pitcher, you will find a lantern and matches in it. Light the candle and hold the lantern low down under the bush, and you will see your way—it is wide enough and good walking after the first ten feet. I will follow you, and direct you when to avoid turning into the side fractures which would lead you astray. Some day it may be worth your while to follow out these side cracks; your feet will be better explorers than an old woman's, and I would like to know where they lead one. Can you find my lantern? Close under the bush where the water trickles—a little farther that way—you cannot miss it."

Following her directing voice, he found the lantern and lighted the piece of candle in it; then holding it low down in the rock, he saw a broad opening which gradually inclined away from him into the depths of the mountain. He raised himself to an erect position in the crevice to look after his companion. She was close beside him with her staff. Then he commenced slowly and cautiously to descend the inclined plane in the rock, holding the light before him. The descent was easy enough, and the upper side of the crack was more than two feet above his head. As he discovered the path to be quite uniform in its character, following down beside the stream which had so singularly commenced at the very summit of the cliff, he regained his confidence and moved more rapidly downwards.

There was wonderful charm to his adventurous nature in penetrating thus to the base of a mountain which had so often excited his curiosity and speculations from childhood, and which he had deemed inaccessible to aught except the birds. He had scaled that mountain under the stimulus of despair. He was now returning home by a subterranean way, saved, full of hope, inspired, and with a vague realization that the supernatural had interposed in his behalf. He was twenty-eight years of age. Only one week before he was the favorite and only child of an affluent and honored father, whose domain was marked off in the village not far from the base of the mountain. He was regarded as the sole heir of that indulgent father's estate. Within that week Judge Holden had breathed his last, and by the will Clarence was ignored, and the entire property devised to another. The decedent, to the astonishment of the community, in the opening clause of his will declared that a base imposition had been practised upon him years before; that the evidence of the fraud was conclusive to his mind, and that the author should not be successful in his purpose; that Clarence, notwithstanding strong family resemblances to himself and to his wife, was not his son. He was confident that an exchange of children had been made in infancy, and his own child had been stolen from him. He stated in candor that Clarence might not yet know of the affair, but he nevertheless chose to retain all of his property for his own child, should he still be living; and in furtherance of that natural instinct, he made such disposition of his estate that his son might receive the benefit of it, should he ever be found alive. He professed his entire ignorance of the parentage of the said Clarence, but declared that the evidence of his being a stranger to the Holden blood was conclusive, and that his will was based entirely upon facts, and not upon hasty judgment or prejudice. His large estate was given to a well known citizen and a relative of the testator. The only exception to this

sweeping act of disinherison, was a brief and singular clause giving to the said Clarence *an old clock*, which was evidently one hundred years old, and which had stood in its antique beauty in the hall of the Judge's residence for many years. The character of Judge Holden, and his well known clearness and calmness of judgment, precluded the possibility of aberration of intellect, and the will was evidently unimpeachable. Clarence was cast out upon the world a beggar, and with the unfortunate position of being a son of *nobody*. His first impulse led him to collect manuscripts upon which he had been many years engaged, and send them to New York for publication. They had been returned to him with the assurance of the publisher that such literary productions would not pay for the expense of publication; the large circle of his elegant acquaintance dropped him from society at once; he could procure recommendation to no place in which an educated gentleman would be able to earn a livelihood. With the impulse and the energy of despair, he scaled the mountain to die. At an earlier period of life he would have clung to hope and struggled longer; but at his age life had lost much of its brightness and its illusions, and this loss aided his pride to seek death. He had no friend to counsel him to live, to soothe his desolate heart, to whisper to him of God. His old nurse clung to him on the border of death, and by the force of her imagination (or as the superstitious would express it, by the direct inspiration of the invisible life) wooed him back to earth.

As he moved cautiously along down the inclined plane in the heart of the mountain, followed by the preserver of his life, the iron will which had been once so strong within him returned, and with it came that enthusiasm which was wont to send the hot blood pressing and whirling upon his brain. He conversed at length cheerfully and earnestly, telling her of new purposes and plans which he would carry out. He thanked her warmly, time and again, for her interposition to

save him; but more particularly did he dwell upon the inspired words which had come from her lips in the trance, declaring that they filled his heart like the breath of the Eternal, and moved him to feelings of awe and worship which were strange to him. He assured her that, should success indeed crown his efforts, he would provide for his preserver during the residue of her life. And she, directing him occasionally where to turn in his path, followed vigorously in his footsteps, and drawing from him, meanwhile, all the singular details of his unfortunate history for the past week. She told him, too, of a vacant house near the village, and on the river bank, very small and very comfortable, and that it could be rented for a small sum. She promised, moreover, to be his security for the rent until he could raise the amount. The vacant tenement had only two small rooms, and would answer his purpose well. He could study, and write, and sleep in one, and cook for himself in the other. Winter was yet far off, and the cost of his fuel would be a mere trifle. He was already admitted to practice in the courts of the State, and might be fortunate enough to find legal employment before the cold weather should come on. If any clients should find their way to his little office on the river bank, so much the better. But his first hope was his pen and his tongue. An exciting political campaign was just opening, and he would take the stump for his party. He determined to write a speech which should force his neighbors to secure his services for the canvass of the county. At the same time he could find opportunity in the still hours of the night to devote himself to his favorite pursuit, literature. Nothing should daunt or discourage him again from his purpose to furnish such composition for publication as should secure him fame among men of letters.

In the discussion of these plans, time sped away, and the end of the subterranean journey was close at hand. At a word of caution from Nora, the lantern-bearer paused, and passed the light into her keeping. She advanced a few

steps, and, extending the lantern before her, revealed a narrow fissure in the rock upon which they were standing. With considerable difficulty she climbed down into this dismal aperture, which scarcely admitted her person. She reached the bottom after a descent of some twenty feet, and then held up the light to guide the descent of her companion. When he stood once more beside her, she advanced a few feet further, and then pushed aside with her hand a heavy pile of pine branches, which were used as a screen over a narrow opening in a wall of carefully laid masonry. Following his guide through this opening, he found himself standing in a cellar of a house. Nora carefully covered up the approach to the crevice with the green boughs, and then led the way up narrow stairs to the kitchen of her own little dwelling.

The surprise was complete. No one would ever find this subterranean path to the summit of the mountain, so long as the secret of the cellar was maintained.

Nora retired to her bedroom, and provided herself with dry garments. Then she kindled a large fire on the hearth, by which her guest succeeded in drying his own. She wiped away the blood from his torn hands, and bound his wounds with oil and leaves of wild plants gathered on the mountain. She brought from an old iron-bound chest a straw hat to supply the place of the one which had fallen down the cliff. Then she cooked a supper for him, and served it up on the table of her kitchen, and while he ate she stood near and waited upon him with the gentleness of the old nurse who had watched him in infancy.

When the hour of parting came, and he stood upon the threshold of the kind old soul who had saved him, and murmured again his tearful gratitude, she said :

"It may be a strange act for you, but I charge you, do not fail when you retire to sleep this night to kneel down in adoration and gratitude to that Heavenly Father who has protected you this day, and given hope to your existence."

The door closed upon him, and he stood in one of the principal streets of the village of his birth. The stars glistened above him. It filled him with awe to realize what an immense distance he must have travelled in the heart of the mountain and under the earth to reach his present position, so near his home—alas! his home no longer. This would be the last night he could sleep beneath that roof which he had been taught to believe his own. This desolate thought staggered his purpose. Ah, it is a sickening thought for an affectionate heart to give up home. He yielded but a moment. Clenching his fist and his teeth, he started forward along the street. Then he became calm again, and whispered to himself:

“But I have God and Nora; yes, a strange *old clock*, too. What is the mystery of this—this faithful, venerable, time-worn clock?—it must belong to me by some stronger right than this singular will. Who am I, and what is the clock? I have no father—no mother—I have no name, even! And yet I have a clock one hundred years old—nearly four times as old as myself. Never mind! I am to succeed—the spirit of the highlands has said it.”

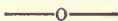
Thus puzzled, and studying deeply, he passed along the street; all was quiet, and the town was sleeping. He passed thoughtfully beyond the dwellings, out into the fields, in the direction of Judge Holden's estate. His course led him past the gloomy home of Nicholas Traver. Some unusual commotion must have transpired at that hour of the night, to gather so many persons and so many lanterns about the stables of the Traver family. The gate was open, and the excitement seemed to invite him in. In times of public calamity, forms and restraints are forgotten. He walked into the premises and made his way towards the crowd at the stables. Under a great tree near the barns, several men were holding lanterns over a large grey object stretched on the grass.

“What is it?” he inquired, as he entered the curious circle, of a silent spectator who stood a little apart. The man

addressed turned to him with an exclamation of recognition, then answered :

“It is Mr. Traver’s favorite stallion, Tornado; he was struck by lightning to-night, and instantly killed.”

The young man glanced upwards at the distant cliff, faintly revealed in the clear starlight; then turned away and walked thoughtfully out into the highway.



CHAPTER III.

NORA sat alone in the lamplight. She leaned over her table, and her eyes were full of tears. The cause of her emotion was a miniature painted on ivory. She had taken it from a little packet which lay on her table. She dried her eyes and looked at it again, bringing it nearer to her lamp. It was more satisfactory in this new position, for she smiled and murmured, “My own beautiful darling—my own—my own—I was sure of it—indeed I was. The same proud look and consciousness of power as her mother—the same large, lustrous eyes, hiding away from familiarity with strangers under the black, sweeping eyelashes. Yes!—yes!—there is the same real peach-flush in the dark cheeks. That wicked, wicked smile, so full of meaning. A master hand has painted this. Poor child! what *does* she do with all that hair, so glossy black, so heavy? Why, I could scarcely manage it then, when she was so young—and now, what must it be? Ah me! God is good. She looks proud and happy. It has not broken her heart then. She is free of him now, and her old look has come back to her. To sacrifice my darling so, it was a burning, *burning* shame. But I must finish her letter now. How sweet of her to have this painted all for me—for me, her old nurse!”

After another glance at the miniature, she laid it aside and resumed the reading of the letter.

“If I had not been such a mere child, I should have insisted on knowing why papa was in such a desperate strait. But you did not get my note, and I had no mother, no sister, to advise me. Poor papa was so agonized, and begged so hard, and I could not refuse to save my own father’s life. Oh! it is such a mystery to me. I am very bitter sometimes when I think of it. It cannot be right to doom a woman to such torture as I have passed through, to save any man’s life. But I am free now, and I intend to secure as much of enjoyment in life as I can consistently with those principles which you taught me so faithfully. Nora, dearest, the best years of my life for study and cultivation have been stolen from me. To be sure, I have learned much of those practical ideas of life which will aid me to distrust and watch men who approach me now on account of my great wealth. (Since I have been a widow, I have refused six offers of marriage, for I will not marry a foreigner.) But you know, dearest, that a woman needs to know something besides the art of entertaining company, and avoiding foolish marriages, and appreciating art and music. Oh! as these ancient and wonderful temples have stood before me under these strange skies—as these aqueducts and baths and libraries have passed in bewildering review before me, my brain has fairly ached to know something of the empires, and rulers, and characteristics of the people contemporary with them. In timid silence I have listened to conversations of the learned and the cultivated, in which by my birth and position I should have been a participant. I am too proud to avow my ignorance, and too proud to make pretensions. By every means in his power, that old husband of mine sought to keep me in ignorance. He tormented me by his evasive and dubious answers. He drove from me the learned and the great. He would not allow me to read. You know how a mean man can make his wife wretched, when she is too proud to become mean herself to torment him in return. I have struggled hard to retain my self-

respect, and treat him as the law of God requires. But now I am free, and I am as wild as a hare—do you know exactly what that means?—for I don't. I never saw a hare in my life. Well, the first move after old Baltimore was dead, was to secure a proper and dignified place for myself to study in. I was ashamed to come back to my own country in such a deplorable state of ignorance. I selected a small house in Paris, and lived very quietly. Miss Angier, a young American lady, and the daughter of an artist, lived with me. I promised to support her as long as she would instruct me. She has been with me constantly, and declared that she has transferred to me every idea she ever had in her life. I have read everything with her, and I intend to bring her to America with me, to live with me. She is a good girl, but she *will* flirt with every man that crosses her path. She differs from me in this respect, for I only can flirt with men of intellect. I confess it is a solemn species of flirtation for me, mixed with awe. For, I assure you, my dearest Nora, I am perfectly crazy on the subject of intellect. If I ever marry—that is to say, if I ever love—it must be a genius who will win me.

“But I will sail soon, and be once more in your arms, sweetest Nora. Then you will know exactly what I am. I feel the need of your protecting care and judgment, for though I am a widow, I am too young to launch forth alone upon the great sea of life. And you have always seemed to me so superior in education and character to the ladies papa entertained at home. I never was deceived by your position as my nurse, dearest Nora; I always knew you were a high-toned lady by birth! And though you have guarded your secret so completely from me and from all, I shall ever look up to you as my superior in character, and rank, and goodness.

“This brings me to the business part of my letter. Nora, I have so much money, that I am at a loss what to do with it. Mr. Baltimore was so successful in his speculations on this

side of the water, that his property is really immense. He gave everything to me. He hated the few relatives he had, and I have reaped the benefit of that hate. Now I assure you, dearest, I intend to have a good time. I always did love to spend money, and now I expect to give my tastes a free rein. The property is invested in permanent securities here, and here it shall remain. The interest flows in upon me in a continuous stream, and I shall spend every cent of it. A large sum in cash was left in bank here, and that only will I transfer to the other side. Mr. Baltimore's homestead on the Hudson is mine too, and I shall transform that into a magnificent place. You are to live with me, and in whatever character you prefer. But with me, you shall live for ever. I send with this packet drafts payable to your order; and now I will tell you what I authorize my darling Nora to do with the money. I expect to sail in May next.

"Take the enclosed letter to the tenant who occupies 'The Glen;' that is Mr. Baltimore's homestead. It is fifteen miles distant from papa's place. It commands a fine view of the river. You must know where it is, I am sure. Upon receiving my letter, the tenant will prepare to leave the premises. Then send for the artist in New York whose address I enclose to you, and whose taste is admirable. Give him the minute instructions in regard to beautifying and improving 'The Glen,' which I send in this packet. In case of discrepancy of taste, your decision is to be final.

"I have collected a great number of elegant paintings and some fine statuary; and also some antique bronzes and fountains for embellishing the grounds. Tell him to spare no expense to make 'The Glen,' the gem of the Hudson. Be sure to arrange your own apartments to suit yourself, if my plan of your rooms is not satisfactory. You will notice that I have arranged some *secret* doors and passages; you might have surmised this from certain elements of my character. You may add to these, if you like; and then you can give me a startling surprise some day.

“You will see from my instructions to the artist, that I intend to entertain a great deal of company. The selection of all the servants for the place rests with you. I have written to papa to purchase the finest carriage and saddle-horses for my stables. He is such a splendid horseman, and can judge of their qualities.

“Now everything is in your hands. Have all in readiness for my coming. Recollect, ‘The Glen’ will ever be your home, my dear old nurse, and that I shall feel proud to have you assume authority there; and draw upon me for all the funds you may need now and hereafter. I have been presented with a full-blooded Arabian steed by an English nobleman. I ride constantly, and this beautiful horse is my pride. His color is snow white. His name is ‘Mirage of the Desert,’ often seen in the distance, but never overtaken. You will be delighted with him.

“And now good-by, sweetest Nora. I hope you will love me when I come. I shall be much changed. I was a petted and spoiled child. I have been a wretched wife. And now I am a proud and ambitious widow. You only can make me gentle and good. Pray for me. Goodness knows I need it.

“Ever your darling,

“GRACE BALTIMORE.”

The letter fell from the old woman’s hand, and her eyes fairly blazed with some hidden joy. The secret fountain of old memories, long suppressed, was suddenly opened, and that desolate heart saw the hand of God extended to her by the weary wayside of life in touching tenderness and cheer. She fell upon her knees, and extending her aged arms across the old Bible, which ever crowned her table, poured forth her thanks to Him whose goodness had offered to her a soothing balm on her journey to the grave. To her lonely life memory and hope had come so sweetly hand in hand. Was it not well that she had trusted God, now that her old age was to be pillowed in ease and honor? Had He not watched her

patience and her self-denial as she leaned over the couches of His suffering poor? And was He not at this late hour coming to bestow the reward which is promised even in this life, to those who serve Him?

She arose from her knees, and gathering up the miniature and the letters, packed them carefully away in her chest. Then she came again to her table, and leaning her forehead upon her hands, studied long and deeply. She would accept the charge her darling had offered her. It entailed much discretion, much delicacy of action and of feeling, and much care. The pleasure far outweighed the care, and by its side, too, was duty. She knew "The Glen" right well; such a lovely place to live—such a sweet place to die. Perchance her mission was to guide that wild, beautiful woman to a closer walk with God. Her own example at least should be ever present to Grace, and her voice ever near at hand to whisper on the side of virtue. The memory of the rescued suicide was blended with her reverie, and she could not avoid the hope and the prayer that he might eventually win place and power, and sue successfully for the hand of the brilliant young widow. And while the happy old heart pondered and smiled to herself alone, the angels spread over her the net of sleep, and she dreamed with her forehead resting in the hollows of her hands.

While Nora slept, Clarence Holden studied and transferred to the paper before him thoughts and arguments for the political campaign. His first effort had been a success. To the surprise of his political friends, and indeed of the whole village, he appeared at a convention called by his party for the purpose of nominating a candidate for election to Congress. The impression had been general that he would retire into utter seclusion, overwhelmed with dismay and shame. But the public were never more mistaken. It cost his pride and sensitiveness a severe trial to advance into the presence of men who were inclined to follow the public lead, and to think that it was really a disgrace to be discarded by a

wealthy father. Resolutely, and with a frankness of manner which was innate, he extended his hand to his old acquaintances, and by the very force of his address compelled them to talk to him. He spoke cheerfully of the party prospects, and announced his determination to enter by his pen and voice into the canvass. He found in the crowd who gathered to the nominating hall, a laboring man who was indebted to him for many favors. He found the man cordial to him, and at heart sorry for his sudden fall. At his request, when the public speaking commenced, the laborer called lustily for "Holden! Holden!" The name sounded strangely, for it was not a familiar word in political conventions. At the first call, ringing clear and with emphasis over the tumultuous throng, a muscular figure sprang to the platform, and a voice instantly pealed forth above every sound like a trumpet-call: "I stand in the midst of a party where the poor man has a hearing."

The clear powerful voice attracted instant attention. The confusion of the convention subsided, and all-eyes were turned to the speaker. The erect figure and the broad chest were a passport. He looked like a *man*.

"I stand in the midst of a party where the struggling and the down-trodden are listened to."

The voice rose louder and clearer over the throng:

"Aye! and by the virtue and the sincerity which once dwelt in that party, I claim the right to be heard. I am an outcast, and I never did a mean act, or penned an unjust word, or deserted the right for the sake of lucre in my whole lifetime. Why I am unfortunate and cast aside, I know not. But this I do know: I see in the broad manly bosoms which heave around me—in the fearless, honest gaze of the eyes which read me—that a young man so faithful to the party as I have been shall be heard. I am going into this canvass with my whole soul. Greater principles were never at stake, and greater efforts were never made than I shall make to ensure the election of the Honorable George

Robinson to Congress. Listen to my reasons, for the stamp of eternal truth is upon them, and you shall see them cleave their way to victory."

Then followed the most carefully digested argument which ever rolled away in thunder over the souls of men. The thoughts were the burning coinage of the brain, fashioned under the midnight lamp, and stamped with the die of a sincere heart. Sincerity glances to the brains of a hushed crowd like a voice from heaven. The earnest-minded drank in every word as it fell. That wonderful voice lulled oft into the low musical monotone of recital; then, like a mountain tornado, it gathered force in going, till the souls of the listeners shook like forest trees, and fire thrilled through every throbbing pulse. The poor outcast boy of the Hudson was inspired. The lonely heart trembled with the might of his native mountains, and *soul* triumphed over prejudice and caste.

Oh! the wild, thrilling thunders of applause drowning the speaker's voice, which never faltered, but, clarion-like, again and again broke forth over the tumult, and hushed it with regal mastery to silence.

At last, with a mighty cadence, his arm fell, and he bowed himself away. *Victory.*

Honest hands grasped him on every side, and with a burning brain and a strange lustre in his eyes, he was led he knew not whither.

The lamp burned now in his little room by the river, and the shadow of his hurrying pen quivered across the paper. At last the speech for his engagement by the committee was finished, and the pen fell. Twenty-five dollars was nearly earned. Six months rent of his little house was nearly paid. Bravo, Nora! your risk of your little all was wisely taken. You have nursed now the fire of genius. For "I am to succeed—the spirit of the highlands has said it."

With a sigh of fatigue, he leaned back in his hard arm-chair, and closed his weary eyes. His brain was overtaken.

He had studied hard. His thoughts were yet hovering over his exciting speech, and the blood pressed hotly to his head. After a time, a reverie led him off, and his brow grew cool. Then the present asserted her claims to attention. An evenly marked sound fell upon his ear—*tick, tick, tick*. He barely noticed it, and dreamed away again. Then a louder summons came. A whirring sound vibrated in the silent room, and a distinct, solemn stroke fell like the distant music of a cathedral bell. *One*. He opened his eyes upon his only friend and relative—the stately, time-worn, solemn *clock*.

“Go to bed, shall I? Well, after one more glance into your honest old face, I will. Tell me, old faithful, who am I, and who are you, any way? You’ve a face, and a voice, and two hands. Give me some sign of identity. Your age entitles you to be heard. Come, old centenarian, own up. Who am I?” *Tick, tick, tick*. “Who are you?” *Tick, tick, tick*.

“Aged, mysterious, and impenetrable—a model of mind-your-business and keep-within-your-sphere. But, old friend, I tell you it is a very hard case that you know all about me and my parents, and where I came from, and yet you won’t give me a single hint. What is my name? What shall I call myself? Am I legitimate, or the other thing? Am I high-born or low-born? Tell me, old ticker, am I nobility, or am I scum? Did you stand by when I was born? Did my big mouth frighten the nurse?” *Tick—tick—tick*. “Will you answer nothing but that everlasting tick? But you belong to me. I own you. I love you because I’ve nothing else to love. Give me your hand—no! You won’t, eh? Well, keep your hands over your face like a woman, then.”

He laughed a bright, ringing laugh—the first since his hard fate was announced to him. Success had lightened his heart. Then he studied the old clock from top to bottom. It was a fine specimen of the olden time. It stood seven feet in height, at least. It was cased in black walnut, and

its brazen face was polished almost to silver whiteness. Long black hands stretched nearly across the face, and just above their reach, near the top of the dial-plate, was engraved in the brass the following:

“EDINBURGH, 17-3.”

It had also the wonderful faculty of telling the day of the month, in a little circle near the bottom of the dial-plate, about an inch in diameter. In the centre of this circle every morning, without fail, appeared the figure which marked the date.

“Ah!” he murmured to himself, “if I only had the assurance that my ancestry was noble, or at least honorable, how it would stimulate me to struggle to maintain that family repute! Without a tie to bind me to the past—without a reminiscence—without a mother’s memory to soften my heart—what am I but a drifting spar upon the unknown sea? What shall I name myself? I have it—*Adam*. He was in the same unfortunate position as myself. He had no ancestral pride—not he. But I don’t like the name.”

A sudden thought struck him; he would examine the clock—it was by no means improbable that in the course of one hundred years some writing, stamp, or mark of ownership might have been made upon it. Inside and outside, top and bottom, he would examine it, searching for a name—a name to call himself by—a name to paint upon his tin lawyer’s sign which he would hang outside his little office; a name to transact business by, to marry by and to engrave upon his tombstone. Under this new impulse he turned the key and opened the long, narrow door in the front of the clock, which exposed to his view the swinging pendulum. He held his lamp inside this box, but not a sign of a name was apparent. He stood up in his chair and held the lamp over the dust-covered top—nothing there; he examined the walnut back—no better success; he laid the old centenarian at full length upon the bare floor and

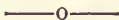
examined the bottom—nothing there; he raised the clock again to a dignified position and started the pendulum. It moved off with a triumphant, baffling *tick, tick, tick*. He stood with his arms folded contemplating his faithful companion, and with a bewildered expression on his earnest face. • It was too much for human endurance, that provoking, baffling calmness of the old veteran monitor. He advanced with a stride close to it, and his muscular frame swelled with fury and his hands clenched together. The word burst from him like a trumpet blast, “*Speak!*”

Still the calm monotonous reply: “*tick, tick, tick.*”

His right hand shot out from his shoulder a terrible blow upon the walnut case. The clock careened against the wall, for a young giant dealt the blow. Hark! What was that? Something fell inside the clock, surely. He took up his lamp and opened the walnut door. Something glistened at the bottom, something had fallen from the works. It was the glimmer of brass. It was oval. A *locket*, by all the powers of good luck! His hand trembled as it clutched it and bore it away to the table. Eagerly he pressed back the clasp, and it opened.

“O God!” he whispered, “who is this?” It was a young mother, evidently, with her little son in her lap. The child might be seven, but his features were strongly marked. That mouth was one in a thousand, and its duplicate was that of the nameless lawyer. He kneeled down by the table and pressed his cheek against the lady of the locket. “My mother, my mother; my beautiful mother, my unknown mother!” He held it from him and studied it with earnest gaze—with agony. O you, who have never known what it is to be utterly alone; to see existence only as a rayless pall; to feel that the sweet and tender yearnings of the soul go out from you and find no home, no outstretched arms of sympathy, no heart of refuge—bend low your head and worship God that he has blest you with the gift of kindred! With a low mournful cry he talked to her and studied her features.

He compared them with the features of the child. Her mouth was beautiful. Otherwise her resemblance to her son was marked. He kneeled long by the table; he marked not the flight of time; he was engrossed; he was soothed; he prayed God to make him worthy of that dear face. Perchance her spirit hovered near him now. He would fight the life-battle manfully since that sweet face had loved him. No shame in that countenance. Honor, bright honor, and that only. With a sigh of relief, he closed the locket and placed it under his pillow. Then he righted the old clock, and it commenced ticking away, utterly regardless of the insult which had been offered to its dignity. He retired to his bed and slept, not however until the mellow cathedral chime of the clock struck *three*.



CHAPTER IV.

No wonder she paused to dream, with her hand upon the porter's gate. The soft misty sunshine of October flooded the woodlands and the meadows of the estate. The leaves of the oaks and maples were changed, but few of them had fallen yet into the sunlit emerald of the grass. Shadows trailed upon that grass, and close beside them fell golden showers from the slanting rays of the sun. Under the low branches of the scattered trees the eye ranged over a great park; vistas in every direction of oaks and maples joining arms and revelling in the sun. And far down the gravelled avenue, across which swung the porter's gate, the dusky outlines of an antique dwelling crowned a gentle hill. Silence held a wizard's sceptre over the landscape, and the estate was dreaming. The oaks and maples, wrapped in their scarlet and purple mantles, were dreaming; the warm sunshine lay stretched upon the soft grass dreaming, and the hazy blue of the sky was dreaming. The deserted, far-

off mansion was dreaming, and the hushed atmosphere of the autumn was dreaming too. What wonder, then, that she should dream under the magic influence of the hour. What wonder that the hazy faces and the muffled bells of the olden time should faintly smile and gently chime.

Was it only the fancy of her dreaming old heart? Was it only the illusion of the memory bell? Far down the avenue a sunbeam quivered through the trees, and fluttered to the grass to sleep. She thought it was a child playing upon the greensward. Hush! was not that voice the ringing laugh of merry childhood under the old trees? A cheerful face looked suddenly out from the window of the distant, silent house, and a thin, white hand beckoned to the child. Ah, no; it was only the slowly veering sun which turned a passing smile upon the old window-frame, and then upon the vine-leaves of the stone pillar of the porch. Surely the heart is not deceived this time; a bold rider is coming down under the motionless branches, and a fair girl, robed in snowy white, is running beside his horse in laughing rivalry. No, aged eyes and dreaming heart; 'tis only that maple trunk has fallen into shade, and the sunbeams light its neighbor oak.

Come on, come on, along the avenue, for the past is buried, and regrets are idle.

The iron gate swung to with a *clang*, and the dreamer entered the deserted park. Slowly she walked in the sunshine for a time, along the smoothly beaten, gravelled carriage way. But presently the oaks and maples spread their fantastic cloaks above her head, and she walked in their shadow. Now a broad belt of sunshine crossed the avenue, and now she walked again in shadow. Then a scarlet fallen leaf crushed under her foot, and the reproachful shadows struck her in the face with their dark palms. The avenue led her slowly on to a rustic bridge of unhewn oak, and the rippling water below bade her a laughing welcome. She stopped for an instant to look at the speckled trout, but they

darted in terror under the low, weeping willows, and she passed on. It was a royal road she travelled, sentinelled by many a veteran oak in purple mantle. She cast one look behind her at the distant roof of the porter's lodge, and beyond it she saw the white sails gliding on the Hudson. She continued on then till the full proportion of the silent, antique mansion rose solemn and stately before her. Then, for the first time, met her ear the dash of a tiny waterfall. The stream which she had crossed swept southward, and after a detour within the enclosure of the park of more than a mile, came round again to the south side of the mansion, where it disappeared in a rocky glen bordered by low, dense pines. The water of the stream seldom sufficed to raise the plashing music of the waterfall. In summer it was never heard, save after torrents of rain, and the usual sound from the secluded glen was only the sighing of the pines.

The broad carriage-road now swept round in a great curve to the porch, forming a huge circle in front of the mansion. The oaks and the maples stood aloof from this circle, which was covered only with grass. No trees were planted in it, lest the view of the Hudson from the windows might be impeded. Every lower window on the front commanded a view of the blue river at the foot of the slope beyond the porter's lodge. From the parlors of the lower story the eye ranged under the branches of the trees for miles up and down the stream. The view from the second story was cut off by the foliage, but an immense open cupola on the roof afforded a magnificent range for the eye over the tree-tops, and the river, and the whole country as far as the mountains of the highlands. This cupola was nothing but a circular seat around the large glass dome which lighted the great central room of the house.

The stately outline of the mansion's front, with its tall sharp gable, was ornamented by the ivy which climbed over it and clung to it till its ancient stone-work was nearly veiled from sight. Over the porch, too, it climbed and

wreathed itself about the stone pillars, and nodded from their capitals. The immense building was formed of grey stone, and looked competent to sustain the storms of centuries. The trees had been carefully excluded from its neighborhood, and the bright sunlight had uninterrupted sway to cheer and bless it with genial warmth. On the south side, a broad piazza, with stone columns, extended and looked upon the immense garden and graperies which reached entirely down to the pine-bordered glen.

"The Glen" had been the homestead of the Baltimore family for more than a hundred years. The original proprietor had accumulated a large fortune, and having purchased this tract of forest land, gradually thinned out the timber until the park assumed its present form. He built also the stone mansion for himself and his descendants, and declared that it should be made durable enough to furnish a home for the Baltimore name until he was long forgotten. His descendants had taken great pride in preserving the dwelling and the giant trees intact. They had resembled their ancestor in industry, and were ever regarded as a prosperous race of men. The Baltimore who had willed the property to the daughter of Nicholas Traver, was the first of his family who was bold enough to alienate the noble ancestral estate. He had no children, and had quarrelled with his few relatives. In a moment of bitterness and revenge for a fancied slight, he had drawn his will and given everything to his young wife. He was well known to have been subject to spasms of ungovernable temper; and in one of these terrible periods he had alienated everything from his own blood. This will had been drawn shortly after the singular marriage, and was the only one found after his decease. The fortunate issue of his large speculations abroad had given him an immense property, independent of anything he had received from his ancestor. Nevertheless, his rage was so intense that he devised away the pride of his family and the homestead of his father.

And here reposed the deserted and lovely estate in the warm embrace of the October sun. The tenant who had occupied two small rooms in the rear part of the dwelling, merely for the purpose of guarding the property and keeping it in order for the owner's return from abroad, had taken his departure, and the key was left in possession of old Nora, the prophetess. She had come to take possession in behalf of the young widow, to examine the site of the projected improvements, and prepare herself to comprehend the plans which she, in connection with the artist, was expected to execute before the return of summer.

What a commentary upon the vicissitudes of life was that tall, dark mourner, seating herself upon the steps of the porch, and taking in at a glance the glorious beauty of her new home. The pilgrim of sixty winters—the old raven-haired nurse of the humble cottage, seating herself in the gate of affluence, with the key of honor and of power in her aged hand! Was it not a dream? that hazy, sunlit, royal park stretching away in emerald, scarlet, golden loveliness as far as the eye could reach? Were the luscious clusters of purple grapes, which hung from the garden trellis in such wanton abundance, real? Were the orchards of rosy apples and golden pears real? Were the rich colors of exotic flowers pressing against the greenhouse sashes real? Were the plashing fountains of the garden real? What would it be, then, in the coming summer, when the hand of art should have been extended over it—when the sceptre of the beautiful should wave above it—when the antlered deer should bound under its branches—when noble steeds should fly along its avenues, and beautiful faces of women look from its windows—when music should murmur along its halls, and voices of mirth echo over the greensward—aye! more, when the face of her darling Grace, the queen of the estate, should look up with beaming eyes, and whisper, “I love you, Nora! Oh, how dearly I love you, the only mother I have ever known!”

Is she not grateful to her Father in heaven thus to bless her? Is not her old heart full of exultant rapture that He has chosen this beautiful place for her to die? Alas! strange inconsistency of human nature—unaccountable lack of gratitude. The old woman bowed her head upon the porch of the mansion, and sobbed as if her poor old heart would break. And there she lingered, and moaned, and wept, till the October sun went down.

* * * * *

Hush! a proud soul is struggling. Softly draw aside the ancient drapery and look in. A lamp burns on an ottoman; the only light of a shadowy and far-reaching room. The intercepted rays cast grotesque shadows on the wall. A fearful silence reigns. Naught moves but a passion-heaving bosom. Naught sounds but a woman's painful breathing. She has flung herself upon the floor, near the lamp, to study a portrait lying on a cushion on the scarlet carpet. She took it from its place upon the wall, and laid it there, resting against the cushion, that she might the better study it. Do the passions fade with age? Look at her. Does tenderness die out and pride fail when the winter of sixty comes on? Look at her again. Her keen eye searches out every lineament of that strange face. Her lip quivers as she detects the subtle lines of pathos about the mouth and the lustrous tenderness of the dark eyes. The painting wears evident marks of age; even the fanciful gilding of the frame is tarnished, and scales off in spots. The dress, too, is the fashion of the olden time, and the curling hair is surmounted by a singular velvet cap, triangular in shape, and black in color, with silken tassels pendent from the corners. Why has she selected *that* from all the array of portraits, young and old, which look down upon her from the walls with stern or smiling mien? Ah! a touching memory lurks in it: a memory so tender, so powerful over brain and heart. Aye! a memory so awful in its influence that it has led the aged woman trembling to the verge of crime. What is her pur-

pose? Why was it taken down, and why does she glance fearfully at every door and window, raising her wild, glittering eyes from contemplation of the picture? *She means to steal it.* Her first act, after unbounded confidence bestowed upon her, is to be *theft*. False to her trust. The epithet stings her. At the thought, she springs to her feet. Her figure casts a tall shadow on the wall. *She false?* The blood heated in her veins at the word. Then the voice of God kindly whispered, "Ask for it—ask Grace—she will likely give it to you." *Ask?* Nora Rudd ask for that from any living woman? Death—torture—first. Betray her secret to the world? acknowledge all? shrink from her height of pride low down into the depths of humility at the feet of another woman? *Never.* And would she forfeit all the merit of her exemplary life, all the struggles to live near her God, all her hopes of eternal life, to the indulgence of this late temptation, which beckoned to her on the very verge of her grave? With the door of Eternity close before her, would she yield to the last allurements of Time? She kneeled down, and, clasping her hands over the picture, prayed God to forgive her, to soften her heart, to smoothe her path before her. Then she wept bitterly. "No! no! it is not mine; I have never betrayed a trust; better far to fly from this place, and wander off beyond the reach of human recognition, than be false to her who loves me. If that portrait remains in this room, I never will—I never can."

Her eyes fell once more upon the countenance of the picture. That gaze recalled her pride. The stern passion grappled her again, and the voice of conscience died away in feeble whispers. The Evil One, with ready tact, suggested a compromise, plausible and tenable for a time. Hide the portrait for the present—hide it till Grace should come—then inform her of all. How well he knew the acceptance of his compromise was the final acceptance of his whole temptation. Once hidden, *for ever* hidden; her pride had then only to remain passive, reticent. There would really be nothing

left but to remain silent concerning an old picture about which the owner would never care a straw. The compromise was accepted. She would not steal, but only *hide* for a time until the owner could properly be consulted. Then all would be well, and the dreadful world would never know.

Under the influence of the temporary relief, she took up her lamp and walked to the great oaken mantel over the huge fireplace. She placed her lamp upon the end of the mantel, and then stooping down, pressed with both hands vigorously against the oaken wainscot which lined the walls of the apartment for nearly four feet in height. One of the panels gave way, and swung back on hinges into the wall of the house. The hinges were long disused, and yielded reluctantly. In this strange opening she hid the portrait, and swung the panel back to its place by grasping the wooden cap on the wainscot which had swung inward with it. No stranger would ever dream of a closet there. How had Nora ever discovered it? She certainly could respond without difficulty to the request in the young widow's letter to treat her to the surprise of a secret door.

Taking up the lamp again, she passed along the apartment, pausing occasionally to study the faces of the Baltimore family, and lingering long before the portrait of a young man in a hunting suit of yellow buckskin, holding a gun. The face was sharply cast, like a Grecian beauty, and the dark eyes were gentle as a woman's. Then she turned to inspect the furniture, passing slowly from room to room, and, occasionally, removing the linen covers from the chairs and sofas to examine the condition of the red damask seats. The furniture was antique in pattern and carving. The dark mahogany tables and chairs had lions' claws for feet, carved in the wood. The sofa legs were griffins with wings expanded upwards for supports to the seat. She knew the damask covers would have to be renewed, but was confident the carving of the furniture would be allowed to remain where it was, on account of its grotesque beauty. The tar-

nished gilding, and the huge rings of the cornice of the curtains, would have to come down, either to be regilded or to be removed altogether ; and the faded tapestry curtains would unquestionably be condemned to the seclusion of the garret. The doors of the rooms were of solid oak, and in the centre of each was carved the arms of the Baltimore family, in relief. The original proprietor had married the daughter of a Huguenot refugee in England, of noble birth ; and being himself related to a noble family, but untitled, and enjoying wealth only through his own industry and perseverance, he adopted, at her request, the arms of her family as his own, viz. a stag supporting upon his horns a lance in rest, with the significant motto " Alerte." It was said of the founder of this American house that he was prone to laugh at his coat-of-arms, and declare it was adopted to humor a woman's fancy. He rather relished the motto " Alerte," as it properly belonged to any man who was able to make his own way in the world ; but as for the rest, he referred all inquirers to his Huguenot wife. But it was noticed, in spite of this protest, he was always the first to mark his oaken panels, his silver and his coach, his books and his china, with the everlasting, ever graceful stag, with lance in rest. The heraldic assumption, however, had become sanctified in the estimation of his descendants by its age, and was stamped on business wax on every favorable opportunity. The deeds and conveyances of the family were not deemed sufficiently solemn without the Baltimore stag and lance in the corner wax. Since that adoption by the Baltimore family of a strange seal, the practice has fairly run riot on this side of the Atlantic. But what was to become of the stag and lance now ? The estate had passed into strange hands. In all human probability, the great seal had been given to the young widow, too. What would she do with it ? Probably adopt it for her future family, and pass it down two or three generations of descendants, until the estate should pass into strange hands again, when it would stamp the wax

of a new race, who in turn should adopt it. These reflections flitted through the old woman's brain, as she continued her inspection of the lonely house. Finally, she reached a door, which admitted her to the immense circular apartment which was lighted solely from the glass dome above. This room was the original Baltimore's especial idea and favorite. He always maintained that the dining-hall of a dwelling should be the largest, best lighted, and most attractive gathering-spot of the family. That the room should be circular, the table circular, and the light should fall from a circular window directly upon the centre of the family group. No matter how numerous his guests might be, the wonderful round table always extended to meet their wants. Sections after sections were added to it, until it was competent to seat one hundred guests. The walls were lined with the most luxurious divans of red damask, where one could lounge upon the cushions and read by the hour choice works from the libraries on every wall. The choicest engravings graced its walls, and antlers of the deer slain by his own hand, stood erect upon the oaken book cases. The projector of this dining-hall had long since closed his eyes to material affairs, but his genial spirit seemed to haunt the spot; and years after years of high revelry or more dignified comfort in this apartment, had attested the sense of the founder's judgment in selecting this for the *living* room of the house. It was nearly impossible to keep out of it. Every hall seemed to lead to it, every door to open into it, and every staircase to descend to it. One never suffered from a cold draught if indisposed for it, and never wanted a cool breeze there in the season for it. The floor was always covered with the softest carpets, muffling entirely the footfall of servants, and the sections of the round table were bound in red baize which emitted no sound in fitting together. Over the top of every door was a globe lamp suspended from the neck of a graceful figure, a silver stag with silver horns, and a lance in rest.

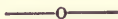
Nora passed on through this apartment, cheerful in look

(notwithstanding the absence of guests, and, indeed, the absence of all life for six years), and entered a hall beyond, which ran between suites of rooms, whose windows looked into the gardens on either side. At the termination of this hall was a door which would admit her to the mahogany sideboards, where the valuables of the mansion were kept. The door was made of very heavy planks of oak, riveted together with iron rivets, whose projecting bosses seemed to defy all burglarious attempts to reach the silver and valuables within. It yielded, however, to the huge brass key which she drew from her pocket, and slowly swung back upon its creaking hinges. There was no window, and no means of forcing an entrance, save by the heavy door. She advanced to the first sideboard, and, turning the little silver key, threw open its folding-doors. A blaze of light from the silver plate and the golden tankards answered the glimmering rays of her lamp. Rows of heavy spoons, mugs, and castors, and bowls, all of solid silver, were carefully arranged on the shelves, and on each one was engraved the stag and lance of the Baltimores. Much of the plate was very ancient, and showed signs of the wear of a century. But many articles were of recent date, and bore the initials "G. B." engraved upon them.

"That will do for Grace, too," Nora murmured to herself. "Gertrude Baltimore—or Grace Baltimore—who will know the difference?"

She turned another silver key, and swung open other doors of the rich treasury. The same flashing response to her lamp's rays was elicited. The sideboards contained the accumulations of a wealthy family for more than a century. The thought occurred to her that prudence might have preferred the vaults of a bank to the custody of a single tenant friend for all this tempting treasure. Hark! Something surely moved in the silent house. She held her lamp with a firmer grip, and pressed the other hand upon her startled heart. She held her breath—a *stealthy* footstep was surely

approaching. She darted to the heavy door to snatch out the key and lock it from the inside. Her hand grasped the key and drew it out, and, seizing the door, she gave it a bang to. Too late! A hand was seen entering the room, and the closing door caught an arm, and could not shut. The door was instantly flung so violently backwards, that her lamp was extinguished; and she was alone with him *in total darkness!*



CHAPTER V.

MARIE HERON was beautiful as a poet's dream. The rose-flush never left her fair round cheeks; the cherry lips were ever dewy, and the large blue eyes, so tender or so passionate, were ever expanding their pupils to the passing emotion, and revealing shades of color from violet to dazzling black; and yet in perfect repose, and lighted by the bright sun's rays, they were only dark liquid-blue. Her hair was heavy, of a light-brown hue, and wandered free upon her neck and plump white shoulders in long curls. Her height was medium, her bust full, her waist slender, and her step like the elastic, noiseless tread of a fawn. One never heard her approach; she did not walk in—she only *appeared*. Her movements were like her nature, gentle. Her soul was full of images, and the subtle fire, poetry, thrilled her veins, and oftentimes broke forth in song. Her nature shrank from rudeness or vulgarity, as did her sensitive nerves from the cold winds of her native clime. Tenderness—worship—self-sacrifice—music—song—generosity, charity—were as really parts of herself as her physical symmetry. Such was Marie Heron by birth. Devotion and intellect had rocked her cradle—affluence and luxury, like a rainbow, arched the sky of her girlhood; and now she stood upon the shore of womanhood, patting its golden sands with her fawn-foot,

and dreaming of the manly barque which should come to bear away the precious freight of her heart's treasures.

Such tender, sensitive, refined souls spread their sails upon the sea of mature life under imminent hazard, under cruel disadvantages. They have faith in every wind; they never take in sail, and, often, their only compass is refined passion. Love of the beautiful lures them on; and, in contemplation of the star, they forget the rock. With natures which may develop the martyr and the saint, with intellects susceptible of rendering wide circles of the human race happier and better, they fail to perfect their mission from want of a single requisite. That requisite is a pilot; that pilot is religion. Ah! must that hackneyed word always start up before refined, yearning, earnest hearts?—that word which signifies so little in cant, so much in truth? Aye! that word will ever arise and haunt the intellectual and the thoughtful till the eye closes and the sod covers. The aspiration after something higher and still unattained, the consciousness that this poor, wandering, yearning, erring heart is susceptible of improvement, cultivation, purification, flight upwards, is the germ from which springs the doctrine, *God*.

Marie Heron had only the poetry of religion. The softly stealing strains of devotional melody, the musical intonation of the prayer, the beautiful regularity of divine service, the mere offspring of religion, she mistook for the parent itself. Oh! it is easy to worship regularly and beautifully, to go with the quiet crowd and return with it, and be like it; to share its prejudices, and deviate never from its circle. But the Master of the world came to the Church, trampled upon it, and scattered it to the four winds of heaven. He destroyed his own foundation, and built another, because the first had lost the breath of life He had once breathed into it. He came for the down-trodden, the outcast, the unfortunate, and Marie did not know it; she dreamed He came for the beautiful, the harmonious, the poetical, the kneeling, the regular. She fancied when He said, "Follow me," He meant,

"Follow the crowd, with its maxims and its prejudices, as they move along to the solemn chime of the church-bells." How little she dreamed He intended her to turn to the first, poor, lonely, forsaken soul that was within reach and comfort it, in despite of the church, and in despite of the world outside of the Church!

How startled, then, was this beautiful being, when her reverend father, the erect, stately clergyman, with the drifts of grey hair gathering fast in his black locks, descended from his closet with traces of tears in his eyes, and seating himself beside her in the drawing-room, said:

"Marie! we must make a sacrifice for God. There is a world of self-denial in your nature—would that I had the key to it."

She looked up curiously from her book to a face which was her world since her mother was buried under the snow-drifts.

"Father, is it the poor?"

"Not as you mean by that term, Marie. It is not a case of food or raiment."

"Is it, then, to forgive Louise Stanford, for her slanderous remarks about me? It will be rather difficult to make advances to *her*. Still, if it is best and right for me—I *can* forgive her—I *will* forgive her."

"My dear child, *that* is a sacrifice for you—I know it—a great sacrifice. But I propose to make a sacrifice greater for both of us than that. We must do something which will start Louise Stanford's tongue again, and probably every one's tongue, louder and faster than you have ever experienced in this parish."

The case was evidently assuming serious proportions. She laid aside her book, and drawing her low rocking-chair to her father's side, took his hand and listened.

"Marie, is it not the highest privilege of a Christian to comfort the suffering?"

"Yes, undoubtedly," she replied. "But will such an act arouse the community against us?"

He went on again, without reply : " Is it not Christian to aid the struggling to rise ; to assist them to be useful members of society ; to strengthen the drooping heart by kind words of cheer and encouragement, and thus let it know that it has sympathy with its throbs and aspirations, from respectable portions of the community ? "

That earnest, upturned gaze met his own. His meaning flashed to her mind.

" You mean Clarence Holden ? "

He nodded assent.

The Church and the world were ready on her lips.

" Father, society has a right to protect itself. If legitimacy carries no privileges with it—if reproach does not follow shame—society cannot exist."

Calmly and solemnly rolled forth his response in the words of the Divine Master :

" " He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

" " Woman, where are those thine accusers ? hath no man condemned thee ? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee ; go, and sin no more."

" Marie, that was a sinner forgiven—protected from the laws of society. But Clarence Holden has broken no law. He has never done a shameful act. His record from his birth has been honorable and manly. Society forms a blind judgment that some one before his existence was guilty of crime, and that he is illegitimate. With fine and delicate sensibilities ; with a keen sense of honor, and a consciousness of personal rectitude—he is suddenly flung upon the world alone. Society turns its back upon him ; the followers of Jesus scorn the innocent, and in his way place stumbling-blocks. At every corner, he is avoided ; at every turn of his lonely life, he hears the word ' shame ' hurled at him. The scorn of society, in which he has moved and lived, will probably do more to induce him to fling away his immortal soul,

than any misfortune of life. Oh! I stood by and listened when that young man sprang to the platform and struck forth both arms like a drowning man for life. I never heard such a speech. It was the voice of the soul pleading for help. That noble, brave young heart dashed against the bars of the prison society had made for him, like a proud lion. The honest men who live outside of refined society, heard that cry, and extended to him their arms. Is the world—is the infidel more Christian than the Church? do they succor Christ's little ones while his own professed followers trample them down? Marie, I am going to him; I am going to extend to him all the support my position as rector of this parish, and my reputation for wealth, can give him. I shall tell him that, in my opinion, he is just as good as anybody, even if the worst surmises concerning his origin are correct. And I intend to back that opinion by every act of recognition in my power. I will offer him a seat in my own pew in the Church, and will invite him to my house. I will never attempt to force upon you acquaintances not of your own choosing. Absent yourself on such occasions, if you so prefer. My duty to encourage the struggling and the suffering is plain to me. I think I hear Christ calling to me in the person of this lonely one, buffeting the waves of prejudice and custom to win honor, recognition, and heaven. If you will leave me alone to face society, I will not contend with you. But if you really desire to perform such an act of Christian charity as will thrill the angels of heaven, I advise you to be ready at sunset to-morrow, to go with me to visit Clarence Holden. I will leave you to your reflections now. I am going out to ride in the country."

And so the Rev. Charles Heron left her alone.

On the ensuing day, just as the setting sun disappeared behind the hills, a carriage, drawn by two spirited chestnut bays, came down the river road at a fast trot. It was a light, open vehicle, and in it sat a party engaged in animated discourse. The Rev. Charles Heron was driving, and on the

back seat were his daughter and the young man who had occasioned so much remark in the town. The outcast had adopted a new name for himself, and painted it upon a tin sign which was nailed to the door of his cottage, thus :

“CLARENCE RUTHERFORD,
Attorney & Counsellor-at-Law.”

The clergyman had succeeded in reaching the heroic vein in his daughter's temperament. She had been engaged in reading a poem on the subject of self-sacrifice. She was thrilled by the poet's conception, and when the evening came around, she was ready—ready for the drive; ready for the strange carriage companion; ready, in fact, to do anything which should, in the future, secure her the enviable notoriety of appearing in some painting as a maiden robed in white, with the palm of the saint in her hand, and a star upon her forehead marked “*sacrifice*.” She was engrossed by the idea as the carriage drove up to the little office, and the bewildered lawyer was forced to accept the invitation to ride. As he seated himself beside her, she whispered to herself, “Self-sacrifice—I am equal to it.” As the singular trio dashed along the principal thoroughfare of the town, and people stopped on the walks to stare, she braced herself a little higher against the carriage back, and clenched her teeth together with the thought, “sacrifice.” She well knew that no other lady in town would occupy her seat beside *him* for worlds. The news of it would travel like wildfire. “Shame! the Herons have taken *him* up.” She felt confident that hereafter her own position in society would be precarious. “I like the Herons very well—but I don't care to meet such people as *that*. They must not expect *me* to call.” She anticipated innuendoes to the effect that it was an affair of the heart; that they had been engaged for a long time; and, consequently, *she* was too fascinated to break it off. At this terrible apprehension, her

teeth clenched tighter, holding between them that magnificent word, "sacrifice." She was confident no one had ever won a place in a historical painting without precisely such painful struggles with pride and society as she was undergoing at that moment. But worse than all, on the broad walk loomed up a female figure, walking leisurely. She loosened her hold on the word "sacrifice," and prayed mentally that the dreadful pedestrian might not see her. Such a prayer was thrown away, of course. Who had ever known those eyes to miss strange and equivocal occurrences on the streets? The lady raised her eyes in passing, bowed, and sweetly smiled. Instantly her eyes studied Rutherford, and that glance seemed to petrify her, for she paused, and looked after the carriage in blank astonishment. The clergyman remarked, "That looks like Miss Louise Stanford."

Well! the first act of martyrdom was accomplished. It was painful indeed. None but a woman can perfectly appreciate it. The next occurrence was a relief, and a certain amount of pleasure mingled with it. They passed an excited throng before a hotel. The announcement had just been made of the election of the Honorable George Robinson to Congress. Cheers, shouts, and booming of cannon were on the air. A man recognised the face of Rutherford, and darted at once to the front of the horses. The clergyman was obliged to rein in his steeds. The man caught the reins near the bit, and held the horses securely, while a voice shouted, "Three cheers for our next member of Congress, Hon. George Robinson!" The response came from the vast crowd in thunder tones. "Nine cheers for Clarence Holden, who elected him," called out the clear, single voice again. The call seemed to electrify the assembly. They cheered, shouted, yelled, and danced around the carriage like madmen. Rutherford rose to his feet, and, removing his hat, bowed once, and resumed his seat. The man at the horses' heads let go the reins, and the spirited steeds dashed ahead. Cheers and calls for Rutherford, the orator, followed after

the receding vehicle until it turned a corner in the distance. The Herons had gone up above par in the estimation of that crowd. Intellect and innocence were recognised outside of society and the Church.

This agreeable incident had removed, in a measure, the embarrassing reflections of the riding party. When the outskirts of the town were reached, and the horses dashed off at a fleet pace across the country, conversation, cheerful and natural, arose between the trio, who had been associated in many a pleasant ride in the years that were past. Reference to Judge Holden's name or family was carefully avoided, and the clergyman turned into a side road immediately after passing the fine, but gloomy, estate of Nicholas Traver. He thus avoided driving past Judge Holden's place. After a time, the party came around to the Hudson again, and followed the bends of the river for several miles. When they had traversed nearly half the distance to "The Glen," the horses' heads were turned towards home. The sun was rapidly sinking in the purple and golden sea of the west when they reversed their course, and by the time they reached the neighborhood of the Traver estate, a narrow belt of purple, hovering low to the horizon, was the only relief to the eye in the mass of sombre, darkening clouds which gathered to the grave of the lost sun. The darkness now fell fast, and the horses were urged to greater speed, for there would be no moon to light the path of the belated. The outlines of the Traver barns and mansion finally loomed up in the twilight, when suddenly the flying horses stopped with such violence that the party were nearly unseated, and then attempted to dash away from some dark object lying directly in the road, and which they would not step across. They made several plunges towards the ditch, preparatory to the destruction of the carriage and a mad flight. But Rutherford, with a bound, was in the road, and darted to their heads, seizing them by the reins with the grip of an athlete. He quieted them in a moment, and requested the

clergyman to jump out and remove the dark obstacle from the road. The reverend gentleman complied, while his daughter leaned forward to examine the cause of the fright. What was their dismay to discover that it was the corpse of a man. It was growing too dark for recognition of the face of the dead. A discussion arose as to what course should be pursued. Finally it was decided, that as the gate of Nicholas Traver was so close at hand, it would be best to summon some of his servants with lights. The clergyman walked on, and swinging open the gate, entered the silent premises. A light glimmered away in the distance from a window of the mansion. He walked on towards it till he was close to the piazza, when the warning bark of a watch-dog brought him to a stand-still. He shouted loudly for help. In a few moments the front door opened, and the proprietor appeared, lamp in hand. He recognised the clergyman, and said, in a kindly tone:

"You are welcome, Mr. Heron. Can I be of service to you? Will you come in?"

When informed of the unknown corpse, he exclaimed:

"I trust it is none of my servants; some of them live just above on the road; your daughter, then, is with you here; take this lamp and walk on. I will overtake you in a moment, when I summon Thomas and his brother."

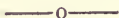
The clergyman with the lamp walked on to the gate, and passed into the highway, but before reaching the carriage, he was joined by Nicholas Traver. As the two approached the horses, the light fell full upon the countenance of Marie Heron, and Mr. Traver raised his hat gracefully to her, with a brief salutation. Then the two bent over the prostrate form in the road, holding the light low down over the countenance of the dead. The recognition was instantaneous. Nicholas Traver, with a shriek of agony, flung himself upon his knees beside the body of his murdered son. There was no doubt of it. Walter Traver was lying there dead—strangled to death by evident finger-prints on the throat.

The expression of the face was dreadful to behold. The young lady sat in the carriage, shivering with terror; but the shrieks of the poor father over his son reached even the servants hurrying down from the estate.

Retribution flapped her dark wings over the scene, and the memory of the curse returned: "May thy bright and beautiful ones perish by violence, and thy name be the symbol of terror for all time!"

Scenes of horror have their limits like all else. Finally the father arose to his feet, and kind hands assisted him to carry his dead. The murdered youth was borne to the hall of the mansion. There was no mother to receive him, for she slept beneath the sod. No sister was there to smoothe out the distorted limbs, and compose the features for the grave, for she had been sacrificed in her trusting girlhood and sent beyond the sea. The clergyman and his daughter, and Rutherford, were kind and attentive, and remained at the gloomy house until their services were no longer required. Then they drove away, and Nicholas Traver was left alone with his dead. Alone! how terribly significant that word in the silence of that starless night! The accomplished gentleman, the scholar, the wit, the star of the social circle, *alone!* It had been desolate enough before, with the crippled son for company. Now the pride of his heart was lying there cold, and his only companion must be that dreadful howling wind, which often sounded like a voice human, and seemed to utter the warning-note of a sudden death. Alone! utterly alone! The proud unrepenting man shuddered and leaned over his dead. Did his strong will falter? Was he ready for reparation, for satisfaction, with the calm eye of his God regarding him there alone? Or would he brace himself against repentance, and risk the coming of the remaining unfulfilled anathema, the fearful curse which already had filled his nights and days with terror? What, after all, was a woman's curse? Should a reasoning man dread, as the ignorant and superstitious dread? Could he, so long defiant

and wrapped in the glory of his pride, fear the vengeance of a God he had never seen, and knew only through the prattle of the priesthood? "Never!" The word came out from his teeth, even as he sat alone beside his murdered, his only son. He, Nicholas Traver, make *such* reparation! He scorned the voice of conscience, sitting beside his dead, and mocking the voices of the autumn wind which rose and fell, and moaned away in that solemn night of his soul.



CHAPTER VI.

It was a beautiful bonnet; and naturally she lingered a moment before her glass to contemplate it. The material was uncut velvet of a light blue color. The soft crown was fashioned of exquisite white lace in the shape of ivy leaves. The narrow cape was made of the same uncut velvet; the lace leaves of the crown drooping gracefully upon it. The inside was trimmed with white illusion, puffed and ornamented with pink moss rose-buds. The bonnet strings were broad blue ribbons. The blonde was radiant in her new bonnet, and her cheeks glowed with the excitement and the chill air of that autumn drive, which had been for a time intercepted by that tragic death lying across the highway.

With a sigh she turned away from her boudoir glass, and removed from her curls her bonnet. She flung aside her circular, and in a few moments descended to the tea-room to superintend the preparation of her father's tea. During the whole time of the evening meal, while the absorbing subject of the murder was discussed, that sigh was present to her heart. It clung to her during the long evening that she remained with her father in his library and read or talked with him, sitting before the glowing coals of his grate fire; and when she kissed him good-night, the clergyman said:

"Marie, this sad affair has depressed you too much. Do

not allow your thoughts to dwell upon it in your room. The dead are withdrawn from our charity, but the living require our aid. I am so proud of you to-day; for you have assisted me to encourage that desolate heart who needs so much support to keep him from despair."

She took up her lamp without reply, and moved off in her noiseless way to her room, with her curls falling softly upon her brown merino dress. She was not absorbed by the tragedy of the death, as her father supposed. The living engrossed her thoughts, and when she reached her room, held supreme control over her reverie. She had gone forth to that ride, to face society, with a romantic enthusiasm based upon an ardent nature. It would be grand to sacrifice herself for the suffering, and receive the sharp poniards of women's tongues; for some day her reward would come, in the praise of the world, which often hastens to laud those whom it has once trampled upon. Unlike her father, her motive was of the earth, earthy. His generous heart was serving God. Her heart was looking towards the crown which the enthusiastic and the romantic see ever clinging on danger's precipice. But strange to relate, when she was once more in her own room, the task which in the morning seemed so formidable, so repugnant to her society maxims and prejudices, assumed the form of pleasure. She could associate with the outcast now, and realize only happiness and contentment. The society of Rutherford would bring no pain, no inconvenience. Why this sudden change? Ah! she had looked into the genius-depths of his glorious eyes. She had seen them kindle with inspiration as they swept their glances along the beauties of the mountains and the river. She had listened with thrills of poetic rapture to his vivid utterances, as he discoursed of the noble, and pure, and exalted in life—of the soul which alone renders men beautiful and grand. She was led by him captive, through his wonderful renderings of history and historical characters, as his intellect came in contact with the calm erudition of her excellent father. What he touched

upon in her own favorite authors sprang to a new life, invested with new meanings. She had known him before, but had always regarded him as separated from her society, in a great measure, by the discrepancy of their ages. He was ten years her senior. But under the culture of the past two years her intellect had developed rapidly, and she began to realize that congeniality of soul is not to be estimated by divisions or durations of time. The stain which seemed to attach to his birth was forgotten. No matter if his features did resemble strongly those of the deceased Judge. It was not conclusive evidence of parentage. In so extraordinary an instance of disinherison, charity demanded of society unusual forbearance in the expression of opinion. She was resolved at all hazards to defend Rutherford, so completely had he fascinated her in that ride. It was splendid to know and receive one to friendship who had studied and thought so deeply—one to whom poetry would be a necessary nutriment of the intellectual life—one who could not ridicule the sublime and the generous.

There are moments in life when the intellects of the young spring to rapid but correct conclusions as to the character and destiny of those with whom they are brought in contact. It is a flash, an instinct, a species of the divine attribute of insight granted to them; and the idea of character thus formed, remains with them for ever. Persecution cannot change it; the remonstrances of friends and parents who claim by long experience to be masters of the art of reading men, can never eradicate it. Commands may be dutifully obeyed, isolation from the object may ensue, or the companionship with the object may be reluctantly accepted; but the idea, favorable or otherwise, is eternal. So was it with Marie Heron. She read Rutherford, the outcast, in that hour of the drive, and the reading was favorable. With just the impulsive nature calculated to form hasty and erroneous opinions, she nevertheless decided instantly, and decided correctly. He was a noble being, untamed by sorrow, liable

to make mistakes in the life battle, but ever recovering his balance by the pressure of an honest soul. He could be trusted, for guile was not in him. Whatever belonged to another, the honor of a woman who trusted him, the property of a friend who confided in him, was sacred. He could be trusted with another's purse, but not with his own. She saw in his eyes ambition, a love of praise well earned, a will able to wear out chains till they crumbled, and a love of the beautiful powerful to refine and purify that will. She had treasured up every expression he had employed, every shade of opinion he had offered during the ride, and when she sat down in her room that night, to pen the accustomed pages of her journal, these lines trembled out upon the maiden record:

“He has thrilled me to-day. I cannot define the emotion of my heart he has aroused. I am constrained to look up to him, but the position brings with it no sense of mortifying inferiority. His whole manner has seemed to invite me upward to a new plane of thought. He is like one reaching down his arm to me, and saying, ‘Come up to this strange place—I know *you* will appreciate the view.’ He is generous, he is earnest; but something whispers to me that he is no partisan in religion or politics, or, indeed, in anything. He will seek to secure the triumph of the right by the mediumship of many parties, and by the employment of diverse interests. He can never become a bigot, and the world will often style him ‘inconsistent;’ but he will be consistent in his efforts to benefit humanity, whatever name he may put off or on. He believes that in the dominant party rests the efficient power for good. When, by the failure of his present association to attain power, right and the interest of humanity are confined to mere declaration and assertion, he will, fearless of reproach, go over to the enemy to wrest from them a share of the good for his race, which can only be secured in the favor of the dominant faction. To his view, sincere motives exist in rival cliques, and he would use either when in a position to effect the most per-

fectly the carrying out of his principles. Once a Jew, he would not remain a Jew always. Yesterday Judaism was the infallible Church of God—to-day, the apostles have become ‘turncoats.’ To think and to pray God, each day as it comes, for light to do and know His holy will with reference to the ever-changing and novel perplexities of life, is the Christian’s privilege, and he should never be the slave of yesterday. I run over in my mind the list of historical statesmen when I hear Rutherford talk, and I pause at the name of Halifax. Oh! he is so like him; flitting ever between foes and rival opinions, to secure blessings for his country and his people. This poor, lonely soul, with his glorious eyes, and his proud, pale forehead, and his superb figure, has entranced me to-night. His expressions and his thoughts haunt me. I have dreamed of him for hours, sitting here alone in my room. I am sure I shall dream of him all night.”

While the clergyman’s daughter indulged herself in reverie over the incidents of the evening ride, Rutherford was at his lonely home in puzzled meditation over a package he had found placed on the step outside his door. When the carriage left him at his humble gate, he walk’d slowly and thoughtfully up the path to his house. Drawing his key from his pocket, he advanced his foot to the step, but found something impeding him. Stooping down, and groping in the darkness, his hands met a large bundle containing some hard and heavy substance. He removed it to one side, and entered his house for a lamp. Returning with the light, he saw his name written upon the package in a bold, free hand, which he did not recollect to have ever seen before. It read thus: “For Clarence Rutherford, Esq., Attorney and Counsellor-at-Law.” In the corner was written in small letters, in the same handwriting: “The gift of a friend.”

He eagerly dragged the bulky present into his office, and closed the door. Then, placing his lamp on a chair, he drew his knife-blade across the coarse twine which bound the

bundle securely, and severed it in several places. He tore off the brown wrapping-paper, and exposed the contents to view. A cry of joy escaped him. "Law books! glory!—this is luck—just the very ones, the very identical ones, I needed: Revised Statutes, splendidly bound; two works on Evidence; ten volumes of Supreme Court Reports; the Law of Contracts, &c., &c. Who could have sent this? I am the luckiest man alive."

He looked with beaming eyes upon his treasure. Then his face assumed a bewildered look. Then he burst into tears. Poor fellow! it was too much for him, and coming right upon the kindness of the clergyman and his daughter, too. He could not stand up firm and manly against kindness. It overpowered him. It was too much for him. Trample upon him, and it was all right—he was ready for fight—ready to struggle against adversity like a hero; but kindness, gentleness to him in his loneliness, was a weapon which rendered him tame—drove out the last spark of fire in him—and he cried as a broken heart only can cry. Some one loved him, then. Some great, generous soul was watching the outcast. Some noble heart, too great for this contemptible world, was leaning towards him, yearning towards him—would rejoice to see him triumph, and cleave his way through the dreadful barriers of shame. Oh! he laid his proud head low down upon the books, and vowed before God that no ambition of his life should ever equal his effort to find out this benefactor, and pay him back a thousandfold. Presently he sat up on the floor, and pressed his hand to his forehead. Who could have sent the books? Nora had no money. The clergyman might be the secret giver. He had unaccountably befriended him that afternoon. No! the quick instinct of a generous heart came to Rutherford. Nothing but gratitude could have sent him that timely present. It was the man he had so signally served, so triumphantly battled for, so palpably elected to power. It could be no other than the Hon. George Robinson, the member elect.

"God bless his generous old heart," he exclaimed; "I would work from now till doomsday to elevate him to any place of honor or profit he might look for. We might have put up an abler candidate to represent this district, no doubt, but this shows the man has a soul. I thank God I have been able to serve him."

Under the pleasing reflections inspired by this last thought, he arose to his feet and proudly prepared a place on his writing-table for the law books. He had hardly arranged his useful treasures in their places on the table, and cleared away the wrapping-paper and twine from the floor, when a knock, as of a club, sounded upon his door, heavy and thrice repeated. He turned at the unexpected summons and said:

"Who's there?—come in."

The door opened, and a tall figure stood at the entrance, vaguely revealed against the dark background of the night. It was Nora, with her staff. The lawyer welcomed her most cordially, placing a seat for her near his little fireplace, and closing the door against the wind, which followed her in with such rushing violence that his lamp was nearly extinguished. She appeared to be much agitated, and her eyes glittered with excitement, sitting as she did in the full glare of the red fire-light. After glancing about at the few articles of furniture in the room, but failing to notice the clock behind her, she entered into conversation, briefly detailing her appointment to the custody of "The Glen," and the progress she was making in carrying out the plans of the widow. She was once interrupted by the strange moans of the wind. The chimney appeared to be full of low, muttering voices, occasionally rising together into a discordant wail as the storm gathered force and rushed past the windows, rattling the sashes and swinging the blinds with a startling boom back against the clapboards. She seemed to have brought the storm with her. From the moment her glittering eyes appeared at the door, there was

nothing but a bedlam of strange sounds outside ; and the puffs of wind even descended the chimney and stirred the ashes on the hearth. It made the lawyer shudder to hear them, those tenor sounds of woe ; and he could not but recall the superstitious belief that they are the spirits of the unburied, who fly moaning over the earth pleading for sepulture.

A lull came, and then she told him the object of her visit. She was in trouble, and needed help out there in the darkness and the storm. She could trust no one but him. It involved hazard and secresy, delicacy and tact. It might require his exertions the whole night. Would he go with her and assist her, and thus secure her gratitude for life ? She repeated her question, looking eagerly into his face from under her mourning bonnet. He calmly revolved her request, with his eyes fixed upon the glowing coals. Then he said :

“Nora, I would be willing to die for you, I think. You did right to come to me. I will stand by you in this matter. It verges upon violation of the laws of the land ; but I think you are right under the circumstances, and I will help you. You have given me my life and hope, and I never will refuse you anything. I will go with you at once. Oh ! have you heard of the murder ? We were riding home at dusk to-night, and found almost under our horses’ feet the body of Walter Traver. He was murdered plainly enough—strangled to death—frightful—frightful. It was near his father’s gate, and the lonely man, Nicholas Traver, is sitting up to-night with the body. I will be ready to go with you in one moment ; let me direct this letter first for the mail ; I will leave it at the office on our way down the street.”

He turned away to his table and took up his pen. He did not hear her reply, the first whispered sentence which came from her pale lips, nor see the strange intelligence which darted to her averted eyes. He only heard her second utterance, guarded and modulated to the proper surprise of the occasion.

“This is dreadful news. What an unfortunate family!—are you sure he was murdered?—were there marks of violence? Oh, my poor Grace! how sad and desolate has been her life, and now this news must go to her! But tell me—why was it?—who is suspected?—was he robbed?”

He answered with his head bent over the table, and attending to the sealing of his letter :

“Nobody is suspected, so far ; his papers were untouched. We examined everything on the spot. I cannot say whether, or not, he usually carried money about him. Now I am ready.”

It was well for her that his attention was diverted by the letter, otherwise he would have certainly detected her agitation. She was ghastly pale and trembling ; and when he arose from his letter and sought his hat and overcoat, she turned away further from him and attempted to conceal her emotion in the study of the firelight. He extinguished the light and led the way out of the house. Intense darkness enveloped them for several rods, but finally they reached the light of the stores in the public street. Nora expected to find her lantern at her cottage, which masked the approach to the crevice in the mountain. There, also, she informed him, was the horse tied which she had purchased by order of the widow, to drive about the country in fulfilling the duties of her responsible agency. They penetrated to the heart of the town, walking rapidly, in consequence of the chill wind, in which the signs of the offices and shops swung backward and forward with a shrill, creaking sound, and the fallen leaves whirled and rattled away over the pavements. They passed beyond the shops into the darkness which enveloped the scattered dwellings at the end of the street, and after some difficulty in finding their way along the irregular and broken pavement, succeeded in reaching Nora's vacant tenement. The horse was standing with the buggy before the door. The old woman entered the house, and bade her companion follow her. He entered in the darkness,

and she immediately locked the door to prevent any interference from chance passers on the street. This last precaution seemed hardly necessary, as the house was quite retired and isolated from other buildings on the street, and was rarely passed at night by pedestrians. She groped about till she found matches, and lighted her lantern. The bare walls only were revealed. The furniture was all removed to a room at "The Glen." She descended her cellar stairs with the light, and he followed. When they stood upon the floor of the cellar, he heard a strange sound which seemed to arise from the bowels of the earth. A long, wild howl of human agony and terror. Nora turned her eyes upon his countenance. A strange, pleading tenderness was in them; a deep unutterable sympathy for suffering and woe. She said, with a slight tremor in her voice :

"For Christ's dear sake, be as gentle as you can ! There has been such dreadful suffering — no tongue can express it ; the soul has been wrung with anguish—deadly anguish—and the poor body has been needlessly made to suffer, too. You are so powerful in limb, and so true of heart, that I have entrusted this charge to you for to-night. For God's sake, deal as gently with this unfortunate being as you can ! Come on."

She pulled away the branches which had been heaped up against the cellar wall, and the entrance to the huge crevice of the mountain was revealed. She swung the lantern before her, and entered the narrow aperture. Her companion followed, until he saw a strange, startling picture before him. A beautiful woman, perhaps forty years of age, with her raven-black hair falling wildly about her, was sitting on the rock, bound hand and foot with cords ; a rope passing round her waist, confined her securely to a rude pillar of rock, against which she leaned. At the sight of Rutherford, with his flashing eyes and his commanding mien, she commenced a piteous cry for mercy, raising her fettered hands, so white and delicate, to Nora :

"Oh, Nora, the good God will love you, and be so sweet and kind to you, if you will save me from them! I beg you, I pray you, for Jesus' sake, save me—poor helpless me. God will let me come back from the kingdom of heaven to comfort you and bless you, when I am laid in my sad grave. Oh, Nora, save me!"

The tears gathered in the eyes of the old nurse as she replied:

"Hush, child; did I ever desert you? They shall never have you again—trust my promise for ever! Here, lean your poor head on my breast, while I show this kind friend how the wretches have mutilated you."

Nora seated herself on the rock and drew the pitiful face tenderly and caressingly to her breast. The beautiful woman suffered her head to rest there, quiet and peaceful as a lamb, while the nurse unhooked her dress behind and exposed her snow-white shoulders to Rutherford's gaze. She had been cruelly whipped and beaten with cords, and the act was the work of a demon. The wounds and gashes were healed, but the scars were frightful witnesses before the court of Heaven. An expression of anguish passed over his face, and he turned away. Then his hands clenched together with rage, and his countenance for an instant was perfectly white with passion. He turned to Nora's inquiring gaze, and said with tremulous emphasis:

"You were more than right. It would be an outrage on manhood to suffer her to fall into their clutches again; I will follow your directions blindly; lead on—I will aid you to the death. Will she go with me?"

There was something in his tone and look which gave confidence to the poor creature, for she raised her sad eyes and said quietly:

"Oh, yes, I will go with you, for you are Nora's friend; Nora loves me with a love passing the love of a mother. If she confides in you, you are worthy of confidence; where will you take me, now—to my child? I am a wanderer on the

face of the earth. I have no place to lay my head, like my Saviour. But I am a lady in spite of these fetters."

She raised her head from Nora's breast and drew herself proudly up. "Yes! I am a lady—look at me!"

The old nurse said:

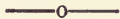
"Will you promise then, on the honor of a lady, that you will go quietly with us—make no noise—submit to our directions until we take you to your daughter's home? If you will promise this, we will remove all these cords, except the one on your wrists."

"Oh! yes, Nora; I will do everything you ask; only take them off quick; it is so undignified for a lady to be bound."

She motioned to Rutherford to remove the fetters from the captive. He stepped forward at the sign, and while Nora held the lantern, untied the cords and flung them aside. The lady arose with quiet dignity and grace to her feet, and stood contemplating the two with grateful smiles. Then she said, as if awaking from a dream:

"I am ready now; put your kind arms around me, Nora, and support me through this wilderness world."

The old nurse complied with her request, and relinquished her lantern and staff to Rutherford. And thus they walked along slowly into the cellar, and ascending the stairs, passed through the house into the dark street, where the horse and vehicle were awaiting their coming.



CHAPTER VII.

THE captive shuddered as she met the cold air of the street. But Nora was prepared for the emergency. She had brought a man's cloak, and a hood well lined, which she drew from under the seat of the vehicle, and with them completely enveloped the figure and head of the lady. Then Rutherford caught the muffled captive in his arms, and lifted her into

her seat, and instantly sat down beside her, passing his arm around the back of the seat, to be prepared to arrest any sudden movement she might make to escape. Nora placed her lantern in his lap to light their way. Then she unfastened her horse, and climbing to her seat on the other side of the lady, gathered up her reins and drove off. She turned into a street which led them away from the lights of the shop windows, and being anxious to avoid observation, made a wide detour which carried them far to the south of the town. The powerful horse, at a brisk trot, kept steadily on his way, and the lantern light streaming on ahead and dancing back and forth on the fences and hedges, enabled Nora to find the proper turning-places on her route. A fearful pall of darkness had settled upon the earth, and the mournful wind went howling on its starless way, now roaring through the tops of the pines, now rattling together the leafless branches of the oaks and maples, and then at the openings of the meadows changing to a shrill whistle as it flew through the fences, and rushed on over the dying grass of the autumn. The eyes of the driver were directed steadily and searchingly ahead, while Rutherford never withdrew his gaze from the dark hood which was beside him. Perfect silence had been maintained for nearly four miles. The captive, for a time, had seemed bewildered by the fantastic play of the lantern light upon the harness ornaments of the flying steed, and upon the ever-changing styles of the fencing which bordered the highway. Occasionally she had turned a startled look into the serious countenance of Nora, and then whirled suddenly around to study her left-hand guardian. Meeting nothing but an expression of thoughtful and attentive solicitude in those manly eyes, ever directed to her, she had resumed her study of the light and shadow ahead. Her large, brilliant eyes, gleamed like stars from the depths of the long hood which was tied closely under her chin. A tress of her disordered coal-black hair had wandered forward and spread over her pale cheek, but it was unheeded by the dreamer. Her whole

soul was absorbed in contemplation of the fluctuating light and shadow.

At length, the sound of the horse's hoofs beating over a little bridge appeared to recall her to consciousness of being on a journey. She turned quickly to Rutherford, and said :

"Where are we going?" He answered quietly: "To the place you love best on earth."

"To Willow Bend?"

"Yes," he replied, "to Willow Bend. You will sleep there to-night. You will never leave it again unless you are perfectly willing to do so."

This answer seemed to be perfectly satisfactory; for she resumed her gaze ahead, and whispered twice: "Dear Willow Bend, dear Willow Bend!"

The driver appeared not to notice this brief conversation, keeping her eyes fixed watchfully upon the darkness ahead. Presently the horse slackened his pace and commenced to walk; they were ascending a hill. The rise in the road was a long one, and the sweep of the wind across their route was now more distinctly audible, sighing along the grass, and fretting against the fence bars with a hollow moan. Slowly and painfully the horse toiled upward, for the sound of yielding sand was heard under the wheels. When the summit was at length reached, the driver allowed the horse to rest a moment. He well deserved it, having traversed nearly five miles of difficult road at a rapid pace, and with an unusual load. Glancing ahead, Nora discovered that they were about to descend into a valley, for lights from a house glimmered far below them. Looking more closely at the dwelling, she discovered an unusual number of lighted windows for a private residence, and said to Rutherford:

"I am confident that must be the Rutger tavern; it will never do to pass it with this light. I will wrap the lantern in my shawl till we have passed it. Too many curious eyes are always on the look-out there."

A rumbling sound attracted her attention as she ceased,

and, turning back, she beheld a light advancing on the road they had just traversed. Some vehicle was evidently crossing the bridge behind them. It would never do to allow the stranger to come up with them. They might be recognised, and utter secrecy was the object of the night-ride. She gave the horse a sharp cut with the whip, and he started off with a jerk down the hill towards the tavern. She deemed it best to hazard the dangers of the descent, and snatching the lantern from Rutherford's lap, concealed it under her shawl. The vehicle bounded roughly from side to side in the ruts of the unseen road, as the horse dashed rapidly down the hill; but the instinct of the beast kept him to the centre of the highway, and the lights of the tavern soon appeared distinctly and close at hand. The hurrying steed would have brought them in a few seconds more to the front of the public-house, when just as the level of the valley was reached, Nora put forth all her strength and reined him to a dead stop. She discovered at that instant a vehicle with a light whirl up in front of the tavern from a side road. That light would certainly fall directly in the faces of her party, if she attempted to pass. Here was an obstacle in her very path. She could not go on yet, and soon the strange light behind her would come up. What should she do? At this juncture she heard a voice call out to the tavern: "Rutger! has anything passed here in an hour going towards Robb's?" That was a startling question to her. That was her intended route. Could it be possible that any one was looking after her—was intending to stop her? She looked about her in the darkness. She knew two other and unoccupied roads converged very near the spot where she was standing at that moment. Either would conduct her circuitously to her destination. She could find them by the use of her lantern for a few seconds. But she dreaded to expose her light. The thought flashed to her mind—what if the captive lady should discover her uncertainty of purpose, and take it into her head to set up one of her violent yells? That would determine the direction of her

pursuers, if pursuers they really were. She leaned back behind the captive and whispered her difficulties to Rutherford, who had been surprised by the apparently capricious actions of the driver. He glanced ahead; there was the light most assuredly, directly in their way. He looked back the way they had come. There was another light just coming into view, evidently at the top of the hill, down which they had come so fiercely. There were still two unseen roads for escape, but the lantern must come forth from its hiding-place, to find them in that Egyptian darkness. The light would be the signal for pursuit. He was a quick thinker and actor for an emergency. He whispered to Nora:

"You must jump out instantly and hide yourself—we are overloaded. There is not one iota of a chance for us, in the event of a race. Three persons will break down this horse in less than two miles, if it comes to a run. With two persons, even, the chances would be against us, for I shall have to hold her in and fight with her when you leave her. But by the Lord Harry! my blood is just getting up. Give me the reins and the lantern, and jump out as quick as you can. It's our only chance, and don't let us be thwarted after accomplishing so much. Jump right out, Nora. Trust me to deliver this charge safe at Willow Bend. Jump!"

Nora Rudd had her strong points, too. She saw the main chance, and grappled it. She climbed out of the vehicle and flung herself flat in the ditch beside the road. As she did so, she heard the pursuing wheels coming down the hill. At that moment, a long, frightful yell of terror pierced the darkness. It was the blood-curdling cry of the insane. The poor lady was struggling in the arms of a stranger, for liberty to follow her friend. That cry as suddenly and as startlingly ceased, and Nora heard no other sound in the awful darkness. She crawled out of the ditch and stood upright. A light, far away in the distance, was cleaving the darkness. Two other lights were at intervals behind it, evidently in pursuit. She stood motionless, and eagerly watching the

three lights, till they faded away in the distance. Then she grasped her steel-pointed staff, and slowly walked on in the direction they had gone.

* * * * *

Not a star glimmered, and the dread monarch, darkness, struggled with the storm. The lonely forest, shrouded in mystery and gloom, roared and tossed its branches to the howling wind. The freezing blast bound the curving brooks in icy fetters, and the once soft track of the forest road was frozen hard in ruts. The trees bent low before the gale, and flung their dead leaves rattling to the ground. The arms of the maples clashed together, the ivy shivered and clung closer to the oak, and the dead branches of the pines fell with a crash upon the hidden rocks. The fox slunk away to his warm hole in terror, and the wild hawk brooded low upon her storm-rocked nest. Suddenly a light penetrated the gloom of the roaring forest, coming along the frozen road. It flashed upon the clinging mosses of the rocks, it danced in fantastic shapes through the woven branches of the thicket, and occasionally brought out in strange relief the ragged trunk of an oak. Nearer and nearer came the startling brightness. Hark! A sound, not of the forest or the storm, is faintly heard. The rays flash brighter, and the sound waxes louder, and the wild pageant draws nearer. The beating of flying hoofs and the rattle of light wheels, are coming over the frozen ruts, and there seems a madness in the sound; for the road is narrow and tortuous, and a slight deviation from the beaten path would dash the vehicle to atoms on rocks and fallen timber in the darkness. Nearer and nearer rattle the wheels; broader and clearer flash out the rays of the strange light. The wild racer of the midnight comes like the wind. Foam-flecked and eager, he flings forward his hoofs, and the vehicle sways from side to side in the frozen ruts, and the wild pageant flies on. Ah! the gleaming ferocity of a maniac's eyes is there, under the dark hood. No wonder the steed whirls the vehicle past destruction each instant, in the

death-curves of that wild forest darkness. But no, the lunatic is powerless, held down to her seat by an iron grip, while reason and indomitable will hold the reins. His left arm is clasped firmly about her waist, and with the other arm he guides the flying steed through the devious ways of the forest path. His eye flashes with fire and purpose, and he deserves to win; for his motive is to save that poor, frightened, helpless woman from the lash of her keeper.

A new impetus seemed to be communicated to the gale. The tree-tops bent lower, the leaves fell more thickly, the howls of the storm waxed louder, and great branches were wrenched from the trunks and cast upon the road. One huge limb fell partly upon the horse, and he dashed frantically ahead. Scarcely had he gone a rod further, when a maple-tree was rent asunder at its crotch, and one ragged half crashed down directly across the road. The race was ended. The vehicle was suddenly checked. The barrier was impassable. The plunging steed was soon quieted, and the driver, securing a firmer hold on his captive, turned around and looked back over his route. Distant rays of light were visible. The pursuers were on his track. There was no time to lose, and the vehicle must be abandoned now. He said to his prisoner:

“Yonder come your enemies and mine; Nora is my friend, and trusts you to me. If those men overtake us, you will be dragged off again to the Asylum. I am trying to save you. If I cut away the cord from your wrists and free you, will you hide with me in the bushes till they come up, and then spring out upon them, and help me bind them with the cord I cut away from your hands? Promise me quick—for there is no time to lose.”

She looked steadily at Rutherford's face, as if bewildered by the question. Then she cast an anxious glance backward at the approaching lights. That appeared to decide her, for she said impressively:

“I am a lady, sir—my word is unimpeachable—I *will* assist

you, because you look honest—I am an excellent judge of physiognomy. There is the character of truth in your face, and you will save me and take me to Nora—will you?”

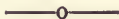
“As sure as there is a God, I will,” he answered; “but you must lie down in the bushes and remain silent till I spring upon them; then you fly at them and help me bind them. I will give the cord to you—come now.”

He relinquished his hold upon her waist and drew his knife from his pocket. In a moment she was cut loose.

He jumped to the ground, followed by the lunatic. He secured his horse to the fallen tree. Then he selected a hiding-place for her in the bushes near the road, and told her to conceal the lantern under her cloak. Finding his directions obeyed with perfect readiness, he crossed to the opposite side of the road and crawled under the dense undergrowth of the forest. All was now dark and gloomy. He tied his handkerchief over his face, leaving barely space to see. He did not desire to be recognised when the pursuing light should come up. The howls and whistling of the wind continued above his hiding-place. The freezing blast chilled his blood, but his sympathies and anxieties were for the wild being who lay crouching somewhere out there in the darkness. He could hear no sound from her place of concealment. The dreadful wind drowned every other noise save the occasional crash of the rending branches. Finally, in the midst of a roar of wind, which threatened to level every tree to the earth, a flash of light came to Rutherford under the bushes. The pursuing vehicle and horse were arrested by the sight of his own horse tied to the fallen maple. He heard an exclamation of surprise from the pursuing officer of the law, but remained perfectly motionless in his retreat. To his delight, he saw there was only one foe to grapple with. The pursuer left his vehicle, and held his lantern high in the air as he looked about him. Finding nothing of the fugitives, he proceeded to fasten his horse to the rear of Rutherford's vehicle, then drawing a pistol from his breast

pocket, he commenced to beat the bushes, holding his lantern low down to the ground. He approached very close to Rutherford, but did not discover him. Turning away, he heard a twig snap behind him, and the next instant he was flung headlong to the earth, and the matchless power of the outcast's arms and breast held him there. A dark figure with another lantern opened a way for herself through the undergrowth and came to his assistance. While Rutherford held the officer down, she bound his arms together behind him. Then the prisoner was blindfolded and led away to his horse. He was laid in his vehicle, and Rutherford having unfastened his horse and turned him around, sprang to his seat and drove slowly off with him. The lunatic loosed Rutherford's steed from the tree and drove along after them, carrying her lantern with a quiet smile illumining her pale face, and with a man's cloak wrapped tightly about her.

After a drive of nearly a mile, they reached a cross-road, where the horse of the captive was secured to a fence, that he might be liberated by some chance traveller on the ensuing morning. Then Rutherford abandoned his prisoner to the solitude and gloom of the night; and rejoining the lunatic in his own vehicle, took the reins and turned down the cross-road, intending to gain his destination by a still more circuitous route. The lady submitted to his assumption of the reins and relapsed into silence again, after his brief sentence of encouragement whispered in her ear: "We shall soon be at Willow Bend."



CHAPTER VIII.

HE stood alone in the chill night gazing at the stars. The brook was frozen at his feet, and the willows drooped low to its glassy surface. Through their branches he was studying the eternal planets, and their cold, solemn light had

soothed the passions of his earth-nature. What mattered it that society avoided him and men looked coldly upon him, when the eternal power which lighted these ancient lamps in the sky was his Father and Friend. It would only be a few years at the farthest when the delicate thread of life would be severed, and he would be beyond those stars. That mighty Architect, at whose breath worlds sprang into existence, was a firmer friend and more reliable comfort than earth's gifted and imperial ones could ever be. And as he gazed upon the star-gemmed expanse, he was conscious that his soul was enlarging; that the ambitious aims of the children of men were grovelling, and that few approximated to the life for which God intended them—the life of aspiration and effort towards celestial purity and usefulness. If, then, this consciousness of an immortal destiny, which throbbed in the heart and quivered in the brain, was sent to guide mortals heavenward, would not a considerate Father offer every aid to a lonely being buffeting the waves of life? Would not His airy messengers, the sympathetic angels, float ever between earth and heaven, with words of admonition and cheer to the struggling? Oh! would not their noiseless footfalls circle round the tempted, and their misty pinions awe back the spirits of evil? Would not aspirations, and prayers, and yearnings, call down the fluttering wings of angels anxious to lead and point to God? Would not the silver rays which from the planets come be ever traversed by celestial footsteps on their missions of peace and love?

The poor deserted child of misfortune extended his arms towards the matchless beauty of the stars:

“My Eternal Father, stretch forth Thine arm to me. The proud love of a human father is denied; the gentle hand of a mother will never press my brow; a sister's tenderness must be for me only a dream. But Thou art my God, and against Thy will I will never murmur. Lonely, deserted, and outcast as I am, I am still Thy child. I feel the throb of Eternity in my pulse, and my brain is the herald that pro-

claims my divine ancestry. Speak to me then, O Father! in my desolation. Strengthen me in my purpose to serve Thee by battling for humanity, and truth, and justice. I am conscious of my power to win earthly fame; a temporal crown seems almost within my grasp. Oh! grant that I may use that crown only in obedience to Thy will, and as a means to attain the crown of the skies. Inasmuch as I am denied the love of kindred, graciously bestow upon me the gift of an angel's love. When I am sorely tempted, let me feel the presence of Thy messenger. The prayer of faith shall remove mountains. Then may this prayer make me conscious of an angel's guardian care, when pride, and success, and ambition shall beleaguer my soul."

His outstretched arms fell again to his side, and he was on the point of turning away from the frozen stream and the trees of "Willow Bend," when he was startled by the soft, warm pressure of a little hand laid in his own. He looked down, and beheld the eyes of a child gazing steadily into his face. He had seen her in the cottage close at hand, where he had left the lunatic in charge of her daughter the night before. The resemblance to this daughter was so perfect that it was needless to inform him this child was the granddaughter of the insane lady. The raven black curls, the dark, lustrous eyes, veiled often by long silken eyelashes of jet black hue, the alabaster whiteness of the skin, the perfect oval of the face, the thinly-chiselled and straight nose, and the refined delicacy of the thin, spiritual lips, were evidently the inheritance from the lunatic's daughter.

Rutherford was conscious, after a few hours' delay in waiting for Nora Rudd at Willow Bend, that a mystery attached to the occupants of the cottage. The beautiful mother of the child, though courteous in the extreme, and evidently thoroughly grateful to her guest for restoring her unfortunate mother to her keeping, appeared to be oppressed by some hidden grief, which gave to her large, lustrous eyes ever-recurring expressions of sadness. If death had recently

deprived her of a husband's love and care, surely the habiliments of mourning would be more appropriate than the chaste elegance of the rich silk she wore. It might be that a living husband was estranged or absent. If only absent, some casual remark would surely betray the wanderer's claim to remembrance. But if estranged—ah! that would be sufficient explanation of the sadness which veiled that mother's beauty, and gave to her eyes that pleading pathos. Though Rutherford had slept at the cottage after delivering his charge, and, indeed, had passed the whole of the ensuing day upon the premises of Willow Bend, not one word had escaped the lips of child, or mother, or grandmother, to indicate the existence of a master of the property. The dwelling was not devoid of family portraits and miniatures, but no likeness of the child's father was among them. The little girl had informed the stranger guest of this fact as she sat upon his knee and explained to him the likenesses upon the parlor walls. In response to his inquiries, the child had seemed bewildered. "I don't know where my father is. I never saw him, and mamma never talks about that." In reply to another interrogatory, she had said: "My mother is Mrs. Granville, and my name is Zoe Granville."

Nora Rudd had succeeded in eluding the vigilance of her pursuers, and arrived at Willow Bend on the ensuing morning, and a few hours after Rutherford. She was so exhausted by her long walk and by excitement, that she had remained the entire day in her bed at the cottage, intending to accompany the lawyer in her vehicle on his return to his office after nightfall. Her sleep had been prolonged beyond his expectation, and, being unwilling to arouse her, he had wandered off under the willows, lighted by the stars. It was here that little Zoe Granville found him absorbed in reverie, and had stolen noiselessly to his side and put her hand in his.

The child's figure was faintly revealed in the starlight, and she appeared muffled carefully against the cold night air.

She made no remark, but turned her eyes upon the constellations which had engrossed his attention, holding on to his hand all the while. He was struck by the perfect quiet and apparent appreciation of his young companion. After waiting in silence a few moments to see if she would not speak first and explain the reason of her coming, and finding that she was completely absorbed in study of the sky, he said:

"Zoe, what are you thinking about so intently?"

The answer fell softly and gently upon the night air like the exquisite and dying cadence of a flute.

"That is my own dear home." She pointed her finger to the celestial lamps. Then her arm quietly fell, and she remained silent and watchful of the heavens as before. There was a singular impressiveness and majesty in her tone and manner, as if she were a young princess pointing out her future domain.

He said, in surprise:

"But Willow Bend is your home. Your mother and all that you love are here."

Again the flute-note melody of her reply: "*My father* lives in the stars, and I am going to him."

"Is your father dead, then?" he asked.

"No! he lives for ever. He can never die," murmured the child, softly. Then, as if awakening from a reverie, she added: "God is my father. He lives away up there, and He talks to me when I come here sometimes. Zoe has no father like other little girls—so God is my father."

The sweetness and pathos of her tone touched his heart, for he said tenderly: "Your mother told you this; did she not?"

The child, without removing her gaze from the heavens, answered, "No! The angels told me."

Still more astonished, he continued: "Zoe, we cannot see or hear the angels talk until we are dead."

The quiet little dreamer now turned her large, surprised eyes upon Rutherford.

"Some people can see them; old Nora says so. When the moon shines in my window I can see them, too. Old Nora taught me a little prayer, and this is what it says: 'Oh! my Heavenly Father, keep my guardian angels close to me in this life, for Thou hast said the angels of little children do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven.' There is ever so much more in that prayer, and when I lie awake in my bed and say that prayer, sometimes the angels fly through the moonlight and talk to me, and sit on my bed. I told old Nora, and she put both her arms around me, and said I must try to be very good, because my Father in Heaven was going to take me to the stars before long. I wish he would take mamma, too. Poor mamma cries so much at night, and she never will tell me what's the matter, but"—

She paused suddenly, and looked up anxiously at her companion's face as if she had trespassed upon forbidden ground.

"Why do you stop, little Zoe—are you afraid of me? I am old Nora's friend, and *she* trusts me—why will not you?"

She appeared to ponder the matter for an instant; then she said quietly: "Mamma forbade me to talk about her crying, and old Nora says I must mind mamma if I want the good angels to come. Oh! see that star shoot; I think that is the chariot God sends the angels down in, to see us—don't you?"

The child's low, musical tones, and her poetic conceit, charmed her listener, and he sought to discover from continued discourse with her, who had instilled these fancies of angel presence into her dawning intellect. But all his ingenuity was baffled by her replies. Zoe maintained that celestial beings, misty and beautiful, had actually visited her chamber and talked with her, smoothed gently and lovingly her curling hair, and told her to be of good cheer, for God, her only Father, loved her. They had been manifested to her, particularly after unusual earnestness in saying her

prayers; and at last she had learned to love them so intensely, and to look for their coming so eagerly, that she had culled the choicest flowers of the garden and placed a little bouquet in her window every moonlight night to lure them into her room. A picture of the Saviour, which old Nora had given her, seemed to please her angelic visitors above everything else in her room. Jesus was represented in the act of blessing little children, and the engraving hung near the foot of her bed. She declared that softly gliding angels had passed through the moonlight and knelt before this picture, kissing the feet of their Lord.

The assurance of little Zoe's tone, and the matter-of-fact way in which she discoursed of her supernatural visions, convinced him that the child was gifted with an unusual power of imagination, and that she had actually come to believe she could see what pious friends must have constantly taught her existed about her in the eye of faith only. An indefinable fascination was gradually weaving itself about him as he listened to her flute-like melody of tone. Unconsciously the little girl had led him away by the hand as they talked, until the frozen stream and the drooping willows were left far behind them. At length a dense mass of forest trees loomed up against the starry sky, and recalled Rutherford to consciousness of terrestrial affairs once more. The long dark outline of the trees, partly stripped of their autumnal foliage, seemed to be a boundary to the meadow of Willow Bend. He looked away to the right and discovered the light streaming out from the window of the cottage where he was still a guest. He noticed, too, that little Zoe was leading him towards her home by a circuitous path, in which the grass was worn away by continual passing of feet. This curving path led them at one point very close to the boundary forest, and in answer to his inquiries, his guide informed him that the Willow Bend property adjoined the great park of "The Glen," which she said was owned now by a young widow, who lived far away over the seas. At least, her mother had

told her so. She informed him also that the brook which flowed through her mother's estate, and which sustained the roots of so many willow-trees, came from the woodlands of "The Glen." She had followed up this brook herself, in the summer-time, as far as the high fence which inclosed the young widow's park, and she was sure the water-lilies of "The Glen" were finer than those in her mother's place, for she had peeped through the paling and seen them. "Oh! how I wish I could get some of *those* white lilies for my dear angels. I'm sure they would like them in my window so much." She said this with so much enthusiasm, that he caught her up in his arms and said: "You dear, innocent child—it must be that you really do see the angels."

"Of course I do," she replied; "I told you that long ago."

In another instant, they reached the porch of the cottage, with its network of leafless vines; Rutherford still holding the child in his arms. A bright firelight from the hearth illumined every object within, and the red light streamed out through the uncurtained windows. He paused a moment outside, to study the strange tableau within. The inmates were grouped about the great fire, listening to old Nora reading the Scriptures. The red light danced upon her uncovered head of smooth, glistening black hair, and her dark figure threw a long shadow fluttering upon the wall overhead. The high mantelpiece sustained two immense candlesticks of solid silver, grotesquely fashioned, which must have been made in the olden time for some family of decided claim to regard in society. Instead of wax candles, which would have seemed appropriate to their solid richness, they sustained silver lamps fitted into their sockets, which cast a soft, yellow light upon the wall. Between the lamps a portrait graced the wall—a young lady, perhaps sixteen years old. It was unquestionably the mother of little Zoe, when care and sorrow had been only names, not facts. The young mother, who sat in her rocking-chair near Nora, with the expression of anguish scarcely subdued by the interest with which

she was listening to God's word, was a beauty of finer development than that of the portrait. She looked too young to suffer mental anguish. Her large eyes were turned upon the reader eagerly, agonizingly, as Mary Magdalen is sometimes painted clinging to the foot of the cross. She was drinking in every word, as if the first faint breath of a merciful God's pardon was beginning to whisper over the storm of her soul. Her graceful white hands, thin, with tapering fingers, were clasped together in her lap, and she leaned forward in the act of listening.

Behind Mrs. Granville was something stranger still: the lunatic lady, the beautiful grandmother, chained by the waist to an iron ring secured to the dark wainscot. She was seated comfortably on a cushioned seat, and leaned easily against the wall. She, too, was listening with the apparent appreciation of a cultivated intellect. Every allusion in the Scriptures to the wonderful mercy of God seemed to win her respectful attention, and she turned with looks of unutterable fondness to the figure of Mrs. Granville, whose countenance was turned partially away from her. But when the word "justice" fell from the lips of the reader, she sprang to her feet with a yell of terrible ferocity, and with blazing eyes tugged violently at the chain which held her to the wall. The quiet, beautiful listener was instantly transformed into a howling fiend. Her daughter tried to pacify her in vain. But at a word from Nora, she sank back into her seat and promised to remain quiet. Presently the reader turned over several leaves, and commenced to read of Christ's agony in the garden. Then the poor creature placed her hands over her eyes and wept bitterly, convulsively, but without disturbing the reader until the end. Then the spectator through the window saw Nora and Mrs. Granville kneel down in prayer.

"Don't you see them?" whispered Zoe to her companion.

"Yes, I see them all—they are praying," was the response; "and Nora seems to be leading in the prayer."

"No! no!" said the child impatiently, "I mean the angels—can't you see *them*—one is standing by Nora, and one beside mother. Yes! there is another one close by grandmother's seat. I see them ever so plain. Their wings are white as snow. And oh! their beautiful faces—how pure they look. Don't you see their hands are clasped together and their eyes are looking up to Heaven? They must be praying, too—don't you think so?"

"I can see nothing of this, Zoe—you must be a little dreamer," said Rutherford.

The little girl made a gesture of impatience, and then, as if the vision was made more palpable to her, pointed energetically with her finger: "There they are—one—two—three—just as plain as a white cloud."

Rutherford felt an indescribable thrill of awe as his eyes followed the movement of her finger, and he sought in vain to discover the cause of her excitement. It appeared to him, as he reflected upon the scene hours afterwards, that he had been conscious of a presence—a something in the air which his mortal eye could not discern, and which had nevertheless impressed him with a sense of purity, and holiness, and protecting power. This consciousness is difficult to express in words, and yet it will be comprehended by many to whom it has been an actual experience. Whatever it may have been, he gave himself for a few moments absolutely and entirely up to the soothing influence, closing his eyes against material objects, and listening to the earnest voice of Nora calling upon God. An earnest, eager prayer of faith is the summer-time of the soul. Power, and honor, and wealth lose their illusion, and the child of earth kneels for a moment at the gate of his eternal home, his loving Father's Heaven. Loving eyes peer at him from the battlements—misty arms of angels reach forth to the wanderer, and a waft of exquisite music comes to his ear that he may compare it with earth's harmonies and beauties, and be dissatisfied.

"They are gone now," said the child, and he opened his

eyes. Nora and the beautiful sufferer were rising from their knees.

He entered the cottage then, carrying the little girl in his arms. The conversation soon turned upon the subject of Rutherford's return to the village, and at a word from Nora the three retired to an adjacent room, to discuss the question of the lunatic's guardianship, leaving Zoe in the meantime with her grandmother. When they were closeted, a long conversation ensued as to the propriety and expediency of allowing their dangerous charge to remain at Willow Bend. In the end the lunatic would inevitably be tracked to her daughter's home. The lawyer, therefore, advised that she be secreted, if practicable, somewhere in the neighborhood, where Mrs. Granville could have frequent access to her, and provide for her wants. There were no pecuniary obstacles in the way, as the mistress of the cottage declared that her means were ample; but who could be found willing and discreet enough to assume this custody of an escaped and violent lunatic? Several plans were submitted and discussed by the trio, but upon careful and rigid analysis, they were abandoned. At length Old Nora, who had been studying profoundly and in silence for several minutes, announced that she was willing herself to assume the guardianship until Mrs. Grace Baltimore should return from abroad. She would confine the lunatic secretly in a comfortable apartment of "The Glen," and provide for her wants during all the time the improvements and alterations were being made upon that property. Mrs. Granville should have private access to her mother whenever she wished it, but she would be expected to contribute an adequate sum to compensate the young widow, Mrs. Baltimore, for this secret use of an apartment on her premises during her absence. Nora considered that her custody of "The Glen," and a proper regard to the interests of the absent widow, would authorize such a temporary lease of a part of the property.

At this proposition, the lawyer observed a quick dart of

agony pass over Mrs. Granville's features. She buried her exquisite face in her hands, as if to shut out her senses from a contemplation of some disagreeable, aye! *revolting* subject. She exclaimed bitterly, vehemently: "No! no!—that is too much to ask of me, Nora; anything but that; you know I can never consent to allow my mother to occupy any portion of their property. I would rather die."

"Mrs. Granville," replied the old nurse, "I knew when that proposition suggested itself to my mind that your feelings would be shocked. You *must* know that nothing but dire necessity, in this present and difficult emergency, would induce me to submit such a disagreeable plan to your consideration. Consider what difficulties this gentleman and myself have encountered to serve you and yours, and then be reasonable, and endure this odious trial of your feelings for our sakes and your unfortunate mother's sake. Some other resource will be extended to you by a kind Providence, after a brief period."

This, of course, was all a mystery to Rutherford. The inmates of the cottage were entirely new acquaintances to him, and the whole matter of the lunatic's rescue had been undertaken entirely out of regard to his friend, the Old Nurse. He could only wait events, and serve Nora blindly, until she chose to enter into explanations of the mystery. Observing that Mrs. Granville remained silent and unwilling to assent to the proposition of the old woman, he considerably withdrew to a window and stood gazing out upon the starry sky.

Presently Nora drew her chair close to the mistress of the cottage, and entered into a lengthy but whispered conversation with her. Her arguments appeared at length to prevail, for she turned to the lawyer and said:

"It is decided that 'The Glen' shall be our destination for to-night. So if you will summon the old negro servant who is in the kitchen at the end of the hall, and tell him to replenish my lantern, we will be ready in a few moments to proceed. Hero is a devoted and trusty servant, and we can

fear nothing from his tongue. He has grown up from childhood in this family. You will have to conduct our charge across the meadows to 'The Glen.'

"As soon as you have accomplished this for us, you will be entitled to our everlasting gratitude. Then you may return here for my horse, to take you to the village. You can send him out to me by some person to-morrow."

He turned away to obey her instructions, and passing through the apartment where the lunatic was confined, entered the hall and made his way into the kitchen. Hero, the white-haired negro, was sleeping on a bunk in the corner. Rutherford aroused him, and the athletic old man sprang to his feet with remarkable agility for his age. He was certainly as old as Nora, and when his tall figure and broad shoulders were fully revealed before the lawyer, he appeared worthy to be styled "The Ebony Hercules." His manner was respectful in the extreme, when he recognised the rescuer of Mrs. Granville's mother. He entered with alacrity into the duties assigned to him, and long before the remainder of the lunatic's escort were ready, he stood outside the cottage door, lantern in hand, awaiting their coming. The lawyer failed not to observe the air of ease and elegance which pertained to every inmate of the cottage. Even Hero evidenced in his bow and manner, and the quiet tones of his voice, that he was conscious of being a member of a family where refinement and gentility were innate. Rutherford noticed, moreover, that the cottage was spacious and elegantly furnished; the barns near at hand tasteful and commodious, and the lands pertaining to the estate extensive and highly cultivated.

When the party were in readiness, the lunatic was unfastened from the ring in the wall; but the chain, as a precaution, remained upon her. The lawyer took one end of the chain in his hand and offered his arm to the prisoner. She accepted the offer quietly when she saw that her daughter was to accompany her. Mrs. Granville whispered something in her ear which appeared to be a satisfactory

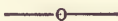
answer to her inquiry as to where they were taking her. Then the trio walked forth into the cold, starry night, and the servant moved on ahead, lighting their way with his lantern. Little Zoe had promised to remain alone in the house for a short time when informed that efforts were being made to conceal her unfortunate grandmother from her enemies.

The silent party traversed the narrow path leading near to the inclosure of "The Glen." Arriving at the point where the shadow of the trees shut out the view of the stars, they paused until Nora advanced into the darkness which enveloped the high paling of the park, and, aided by the servant's lantern, found a gate which had apparently long been disused. The grass grew long and heavy against it, and when Nora had unlocked the rusty lock with a key which belonged to the "The Glen" property, it required the strong arms of the negro to force it open far enough for the party to pass through. Leaving the gate open for their return, they all moved on into the gloomy depths of the wood.

It required considerable effort to force their way through the undergrowth which had accumulated from long disuse of that portion of the park. The servant, however, advanced with his brawny figure, bending or breaking the twigs in his way, and holding the infant trees aside until all had passed. He appeared familiar with the intricacies of the wood, and informed the party that they would soon reach the more open portion of the park, at a point near the rear of the Baltimore mansion. His prediction was soon verified, and they emerged into the open park, where the stars could again be distinguished glistening through the branches of the great oaks and maples. They now advanced rapidly under the trees, and soon reached the open lawns and gardens of the estate. Nora produced another key from her pocket, and directly they were admitted to the rear of the mansion, and conducted to the old nurse's room, which

she was to occupy during the improvements and repairs of the property. Lighting her lamp for the accommodation of her guests, she left them seated in her private apartment, and summoning the negro with his lantern, she led the way through the deserted halls to prepare a secure retreat and prison for the lunatic. As she passed by the massive door which guarded the sideboards and silver-plate of the Baltimore family, she said to her attendant:

“Mrs. Granville’s mother nearly frightened me to death one night by stealing into this house while I was examining the silver-plate, and dashing that door in upon me, and putting out my light. We both mistook each other for burglars. She nearly throttled me before I could tell her in the darkness who I was.”



CHAPTER IX.

THE lawyer sat alone in his office busily engaged in writing. The lamplight illumined his calm, thoughtful countenance as he bent over his manuscript, and the occasional glances he gave at the law-book lying open before him, indicated that he had succeeded in finding a client, and was hunting up the legal authorities to sustain him in the approaching trial of his suit. The dancing firelight from his hearth rendered the apartment cheerful in the extreme, as it brought out in strong relief the present of the new law-books, arranged upon a little shelf, or flooded with fluctuating rays the face of the ancient clock which stood solemn guard over the night labors of the ambitious and lonely outcast.

Presently the venerable sentinel sounded his deep, musical warning of the flight of time. Eight solemn strokes succeeded the preparatory whirring in the clock, and then all was still again, except the everlasting tick—tick—tick, and the rattle of the lawyer’s hurrying pen. He glanced up for

an instant at the face of his friend, and finding the hour still early, resumed his labors. Soon a more unusual interruption attracted his attention. Heavy knocks sounded upon his door, and he heard tramping of feet outside. In response to his loud "come in," the door opened, and two men entered the office. He recognised one as his supporter and newly-found friend, the Rev. Charles Heron. He arose, and extending his hand cordially to him, bade him welcome and handed him a chair. The other visitor, whom he recognised and provided with a seat near the fire, demands especial description, physical and mental.

Nicholas Traver was a born gentleman. The term in this connection refers to birth from affluent, refined, and educated parents, to elegance of form and manners, and to an instinctive antipathy to everything vulgar, rude, or harsh in man or woman, in matter or in mind. His tastes were naturally pure and elevated. He was an admirable dramatic, poetical, and musical critic. His pen was powerful, and his oratory forcible and persuasive. He had exhibited no inconsiderable talent as a member of the Legislature of his native State. He was an excellent horticulturist, and a successful farmer. He was decided in his political views, but a courteous adversary, and a constant, fearless friend. He was susceptible to good influences, and continued intercourse with the sincere and the upright would generally result in perceptible benefit to his moral character. On the other hand, he was easily led into evil by pernicious associations; with a most wonderful power and will suddenly to recover his moral balance, and re-assert his innate integrity and purity of character. He belonged to that numerous class of men of intellect, who generally exhibit in early life alternate spasms or intervals of improper and commendable conduct, but who, upon attaining maturity and experience, become valuable members of society and the state.

In personal appearance, he was a mature Adonis. Nearly every woman of refinement and heart, who was brought in

contact with him long enough to recognise his personal and mental accomplishments, was certain to be fascinated. He combined in his person as well as in his intellect that rare union, *power* and *gentleness*. He was tall, and erect, and graceful. His tread was firm and prince-like, and his muscular development in strict keeping with his princely movements and address. His skin was as pure and white as a blonde girl's, and his hands and feet aristocratically small. In conversation, chaste and elegant scholarship was manifest both in statement of fact and purity of language. In addressing a lady, he usually inclined his head towards her, respectfully and gallantly. His eyes were large, rich, dark blue, like deep wells in repose, but full of fire and versatility under excitement or appreciation. They beamed on woman's beauty in magnetic power and tenderness; they looked into the face of man fearlessly, candidly. Pleasure or dissatisfaction was as apparent in those eyes as daylight. He was brilliant as a sunbeam, or sullen and lowering as the approaching storm-cloud. Forty-odd winters had turned his poetical curling hair of brown into a dark grey. The heavy grey mustache, the only hair allowed to grow on his smooth oval face, scarcely hid from view his small feminine mouth, whose smile was almost angelic.

His dress was always carefully studied, of quiet colors, and devoid of all jewelry.

On horseback he looked the Emperor. Firmly seated and erect, he bounded over the country, well mounted and with the conscious hauteur of the Cæsars. Every steed of his stables bore him along as if proud of the rider's majesty. But for six years he would not ride in the summer months; and the community, with all their ingenuity and perseverance, had failed to discover why. His reticence and retirement were unaccountable, and the public curiosity had finally settled down into the belief that his singular isolation was due to eccentricity; when suddenly that trumpet blast of terror, "murder," rang through the highlands and along the

banks of the Hudson, and awoke the Traver family once more into notoriety. Public sympathy and horror were aroused over the corpse of his murdered crippled boy, and all seemed willing to aid in tracking the murderer.

At the thoughtful suggestion of the clergyman, who eagerly availed himself of the opportunity to afford Rutherford a chance to win fame in his profession, Nicholas Traver, the mysterious and elegant gentleman, had come to consult the outcast on the proper means to be employed to track the assassin and secure his conviction by a legal tribunal.

"I have come to you, Mr. Rutherford," he said, with a slight tremor in his voice, "upon the recommendation of this reverend gentleman. He speaks highly of your abilities as an orator, and pronounces your analytical powers remarkable for a person of your years. This latter gift decides me in my purpose of securing your services to aid in sifting and arranging the evidence bearing upon the murder of my son. The District-Attorney is overwhelmed with business, and desires me to select some competent lawyer to assist him in the conduct of this murder trial. If you, sir, are willing to assume the responsibility of this matter, and devote your energies to secure the ends of justice, I will compensate you handsomely for your services. I have prepared an abstract of the evidence which has either fallen in my way or been volunteered, together with the names and places of residence of material witnesses with whom it will be necessary for you to consult. Here it is. You can examine it at your leisure, and inform me by note whether or not you are willing to undertake the conduct of the matter. I should imagine that, as you are just entering upon the practice of your profession, you would find the notoriety of this trial eminently beneficial to your future career."

"I feel highly honored, Mr. Traver," replied the lawyer, "by your selection of me for this responsible trust, as well as complimented by this reverend friend's estimate of my abilities. I deem it prudent at the opening of my career to

announce that I will never espouse any legal cause which does not bear upon its face marked evidence of right and justice.

“I will examine these papers, if you see fit to leave them, provided the understanding is between us that I shall be at perfect liberty, after their perusal, either to be employed against the party accused in this abstract, or, if I elect otherwise, to become the counsel of the accused party. Shall this be the understanding?”

The gentleman addressed, whose serious handsome face had been carefully studying the physiognomy of the young lawyer during the delivery of this answer, replied courteously to this guarded acceptance of his abstract.

“It argues well for the uprightness of your legal career in the future, my dear sir, that you are thus careful in committing your talents to the defence or prosecution of any cause. The evident honesty of your reserve might be imitated by many of your able profession with benefit to themselves and the world. Your manner strengthens my confidence, and confirms Mr. Heron’s report of your character. I will leave the papers with you, subject to your conditions, fully assured that so far as *you* are concerned, justice will receive its proper respect. I shall await your answer with all the anxiety of an outraged father’s heart. Will you permit me, before leaving, to return you grateful acknowledgments of the kindness you extended to me in aiding this reverend gentleman at my house on that dreadful occasion, in preparing my child for his grave?”

It would be impossible to express the gentleness and warmth and dignity with which these words were pronounced, as Mr. Traver fixed his eyes on the lawyer’s countenance. The listener was charmed, and accepted cordially the hand which was outstretched to him, preparatory to Mr. Traver leaving the office. The music of that voice lingered when the visitors had left; and when Rutherford turned again to his table to resume his study, he said aloud, “That is a

charming, estimable gentleman; I would enjoy being his friend, surely."

Resuming the consideration of the legal suit upon which he had been engaged when interrupted, he devoted himself to it for hours. It was past midnight when he had completed his task and laid the papers carefully away. He sat silently then, looking into his fire, which had become only a mass of glowing coals. He was studying in his mind what strange reports had formerly been circulated regarding the Traver family. No doubt much of the terror which was associated with that name arose from vulgar exaggeration. But of one fact he was personally cognizant. He had himself witnessed more terrible caprices of the gale on that secluded estate than elsewhere during his life. At night the wind had certainly appeared to be gifted with human voices as he chanced to pass by that property. Hark! was not the wind at that moment howling around the corner of his office, filled with warning voices? The gale certainly seemed to pronounce the words "Beware—beware." He smiled as he shook off the momentary superstition, and arising from his chair, flung a stick of wood on to his blazing coals. The packet left by Mr. Traver chanced at that moment to catch his eye. Thinking he would only break the seal and hastily glance at the nature of the papers or abstracts, reserving a critical examination of them for the morrow, he drew his chair again to the table and took up the packet. The seal pressed into the red wax was no doubt that of the Traver family. The memorandum in pencil upon the outside of the packet was very likely in the handwriting of Nicholas Traver himself. He broke the seal and spread open the papers before him. The name of the accused startled him. "Impossible," broke from his lips. He ran his eye eagerly over the manuscript; his curiosity was fully aroused. He drew his lamp closer to him and read carefully the document. Finally he raised his eyes thoughtfully and said aloud: "How many sons has that man?" With pertinent and solemn distinct-

ness the attentive clock struck *one*. The old timepiece startled him. "You are correct, old friend, he has only *one*; but that one *never* murdered Walter Traver. I'd most be willing to swear it."

He commenced the study of the fearful charges once more, sometimes glancing back over parts he had read, and comparing carefully. At length a bright gleam came to his eyes, and he exclaimed: "Here is a flaw, surely. He could not be in two places at once. Let me see—how many hours' discrepancy are there in his favor?"

The accurate and solemn response was counted by the clock: "*Two*."

"Right, again," said the lawyer with a smile and a glance up at the centenarian monitor. "That man is innocent, I'll wager my old clock."

After a further and more careful scrutiny of the papers, he flung them aside with an exclamation of delight: "I glory in discovering innocence. To ascertain guilt affords no satisfaction to me. I wish from the bottom of my soul that *everybody* was innocent. I have lost a wealthy and powerful client, to be sure; but never mind, I'll have a chance yet. Let me see. Some of the bar will take charge of that case for Mr. Traver, as sure as fate. Well, just let them try it. I'll take up for Nevil Waters and bring him out of court as innocent and white as a snow-drift. Hurrah for innocence, any way!"

He studied silently in his mind for a time, gazing again into vacancy. Then he said slowly: "How many members of the bar in this town would be hireling enough to attempt the conviction of that man? I'll count them on my fingers."

The clock anticipated the enumeration. "*Three*," it struck with distinct, heavy bell-notes.

"Upon my soul!" exclaimed the amused attorney, "you are growing accurate in your old age. I was on the point of saying *three* myself. Well done for you, old fellow;

you've counted for me and given me a broad hint to clear off to bed. Good-night to you."

He locked his door, and extinguishing his lamp, flung himself upon his bed, too thoroughly drowsy and exhausted to undress.

When he awoke from his profound slumber, the sunlight was flooding the bare floor of his office. Upon looking at the clock, he was surprised to see that it was near the hour of eleven. Springing suddenly to the floor, he hastened to kindle a fire upon his hearth, for the day was bitterly cold, and the frost-king had been whitening the glass of his windows. Then he plunged his face into the chill water of his basin, and being revived by the glow which the rough towel brought to his skin, he sat down at his table and penned these lines :

"MR. NICHOLAS TRAVER :

"DEAR SIR,—I have examined the documents you entrusted to me last night. After a careful and critical perusal of them, I have arrived at the conclusion that the party accused therein could not have been connected in any manner with the sad occurrence ; and I am persuaded that you would yourself, upon further examination, arrive at the same conclusion. It is unnecessary for me to remind you that the young man was loved and trusted by your son above every other acquaintance, that his character stands high in the estimation of the public generally, and that it will be difficult to discover a MOTIVE for so dreadful a crime in his case. I regret that I cannot serve you professionally. Your advances to a tyro in the law like me, have been flattering, and I sincerely thank you. If any occasion should arise when I can assist you, without a violation of the law of my conscience, I should be extremely happy to do so. But in this instance I cannot, because I firmly believe this young man to be innocent.

"I am, sir, your obedient servant,

"CLARENCE RUTHERFORD."

Carefully folding this note, and addressing it to Mr. Traver in a distinct hand, he inclosed it in the abstract of the evidence; and, taking his hat, went out into the street to find a messenger to carry back the packet to the owner. He hailed a boy of his acquaintance who was passing near, and entrusted the papers to him for delivery. Then he turned back in the direction of his office with a view to the preparation of his morning meal. Before reaching the door, he heard the rattle of wheels coming rapidly down the street, and, turning, beheld Nora Rudd driving towards him. As soon as she recognised him, she motioned for him to stop. As she reined in her horse before him, she said, in an excited manner:

“I want you to get in and go with me. Nevil Waters has been arrested for the murder of Walter Traver. He is innocent, and I know it. You must defend him: it will surely result in his favor; and your name will appear favorably before the public. I can put you in possession of facts which will clear him, without fail. The matter is somewhat involved, but he is surely innocent.”

As Rutherford stepped into the vehicle beside her, she added: “They were not after the lunatic that night, as we imagined, but were in pursuit of Nevil Waters. He carried one of the lanterns which appeared to be chasing you. His pursuer was following you by mistake. The man who crossed the bridge behind us was Nevil Waters himself. The officer who drove up in front of Rutger’s tavern was after him, and followed you by mistake. Your capture and blindfolding of the officer puzzles every one completely. He is very powerful, and maintains that the stranger in disguise who overpowered him, could not have been Nevil Waters, who is very slight and weak. The conclusion is, that Waters had an accomplice. The poor young man has been arrested for the murder. He was out that night, driving furiously on his own business. He did pass the spot on which the murder was committed; but it was long before the deed

was done. I will testify to that fact myself, for I saw him."

"Yes," replied her companion, "I am aware of that; others will testify also to the fact of his being at another place at the time when the murder must have been committed. There is little question that the crime must have occurred just before sunset. At that hour Waters was far away, as some will testify."

"How did you ascertain all this?" asked Nora, in surprise.

"From an examination of the very papers which were brought to me by the man who desired to employ me against Nevil Waters."

"And that man was——"

"Nicholas Traver," replied the lawyer. "I have just sent him a refusal to be employed against that young man. But where are you taking me?"

"To the house of the elder Waters," she replied, giving her horse a sharp cut with the whip. "I am determined that he shall employ you to defend his son. He is my clergyman; and when I offer him my evidence in his child's favor, I am determined that he shall give you an opportunity to win renown."

Rutherford's delicacy caused him to shrink from any act which would look like thrusting himself upon Mr. Waters' attention in a professional capacity. He resolutely refused to enter the house upon such an errand.

"Very well," said Nora, with evident disappointment in her tones. "You will not refuse to wait outside, and hold my horse, until I give the old gentleman a word of cheer, by informing him that I will testify in his son's favor, will you?"

"No, indeed," said Rutherford; "drive on as fast as you like—for I have been up all night, and have had no breakfast."

In a few minutes more the horse paused before the gate of a white frame dwelling, surrounded by leafless cherry-trees.

On the doorstep a servant-maid was standing with her hands to her face, weeping over the misfortune which had befallen her young master. He had been thrown into prison.

Nora left her horse in charge of the lawyer, and walked slowly up to the house, leaning upon her steel-pointed staff. A few words addressed to the servant appeared to quiet her, and she conducted the old nurse into the house. Ten minutes could scarcely have elapsed, when the front door opened again, and a venerable old gentleman, with long white hair brushed behind his ears and streaming down his back, made his appearance and beckoned to Rutherford to come in. The silent summons was obeyed, and when the aged clergyman had taken the lawyer cordially by the hand, and conducted him to a seat beside Nora in the parlor, he looked earnestly into his face, and said :

“And so the Lord, my Master, put courage into your heart, young man, to withstand the allurements of power and wealth, and strengthened you to take a firm stand in behalf of my poor boy. It was a noble, honest heart you had, when you were so poor, and so dependent, and yet could refuse an opportunity to win so much of that man’s gold. The Lord will reward you, young man ; the Lord will reward you.”

He repeated these words with a voice husky with emotion. Then clearing his throat, he continued in a firmer tone :

“Clarence, I remember you when you were a tottering child ; I said then that your forehead bore a special mark of intellect from God. I have often thought of you since the Lord, in His inscrutable wisdom, has seen fit to visit you with clouds and storms of trouble. Keep a stout heart, young man. You are not utterly forsaken. Earnest souls in this community think much concerning your welfare. I shall never forget that thrilling hour when you saved little Maggie from a watery grave. It was nobly done. But this kindness to my boy is nobler still—for now you need money ; then you did not. Now, Clarence, I have only a small salary allowed me to support my family, but I am willing to give you

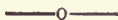
one-fourth part of it if you will try to clear my poor boy's reputation and save his life. He is innocent, God knows, but I am afraid of these courts in these modern, godless days. There is so much corruption—so much chicanery—so much buying and selling of human life and liberty! What say you, Clarence? Will you be my lawyer; my honest Christian lawyer, and bring me out of this furnace of affliction? There are great legal names in this county, but I want an honest man who is trained to the law; and I want to lend you a helping hand, too."

The old veteran soldier of the Lord, with his silver locks straying over his shoulders, leaned forward in his earnest trembling way as he spoke; and then, as his aged voice ceased, gave Rutherford the keen searching look peculiar to old age and experience.

The lawyer responded to his inquiry by assuring him that every nerve should be strained to defend the accused. He spoke lightly, however, of the danger attending the suit, and pronounced a decided opinion that no court would ever condemn a man upon such an evident case of *alibi*.

The anxious old father seemed relieved by his assuring tones, and when Nora and the lawyer rose to leave, he said: "May the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob bless you, young man, and speedily bring you out of all reproach from cruel tongues, by showing to the world that you are well born of pious and respectable parents. God bless you—good-bye."

The solemn blessing of an old man rings along the aisles of memory like a golden bell.



CHAPTER X.

AN! was that really a tear stealing unnoticed down that self-reliant face? Would she at last acknowledge herself

touched at the heart's fountain by *that* man? Was prejudice, was society off its guard? Was the citadel of custom shaken to its very foundation as the storm of glorious, omnipotent, triumphant eloquence swept over the hushed crowd of beating hearts, hurling pride and rank and selfishness to the level of our common humanity? Marie Heron brushed away the mist of her own tears to look at her. Yes; even she, Louise Stanford, was crying. The presiding magistrate himself dashed his hand nervously across his eyes and tried to resume his look of dignified attention. But it was in vain; his lips trembled and his eyes filled again, as he leaned unconsciously forward to catch the cadences of the soul-music. And away down the court-room *there*, just at the end of the line of jurymen, a silver-haired old man is leaning on the arm of his daughter, and gazing at the speaker with such rapt, eager tenderness, that one might fancy he saw God's angel there pleading for the life of his boy. But notice particularly the proud, thrilled, beaming countenance of the old witness with the raven hair and the steel-pointed staff, whose evidence had apparently affected the jury so powerfully a short time before. The cross-examination had utterly failed to shake the clearness and the pertinency of her testimony concerning the matter of the *alibi*. She knew clearly, as to time and place what she did know; and the District-Attorney, aided by his crafty assistant, had retired foiled from their assault upon her with a view to impeach her evidence. Now she sat leaning upon her staff, triumphantly awaiting the result.

But the central figure, the man with the simple dress of iron grey, upon whose utterances that congregated throng of intellect and beauty breathless hung—Oh! how majestically he asserts his manhood—his innate, wonderful gift of leading souls in the bright path of truth and justice! With quick and searching analysis he had explored the evidence clustering about the tragedy—winnowed the chaff away, and held forth the golden grain apparent to the eyes of all. The barriers of the opposing counsel melted away at his genius-

touch, and their accurate witnesses were exhibited as sincere and truthful, but of no account in the face of the palpable *alibi*. Then he passed from the evidence to the contemplation of the probable, and demolished the feebly sustained argument of a motive for the murder. Then, from the eyrie height of his impassioned eloquence, he swooped down into the depths of all hearts, and spoke to the jurymen as men. He grasped the delicate and tender fibres of the heart, and each one felt that his own beautiful boy was on trial for his life. Here was he regal master, and his sceptre opened the flood-gates of the soul. Feeble and fluctuating doubts and suspicions vanished. Truth glanced into every soul, and his client was already cleared.

The peerless and the fatherless dropped quietly into his seat, and eyes glistened with tears on every side, and murmurs of applause ran round. The jury, without leaving their seats, pronounced the prisoner innocent of the charge. The people gathered about the young counsel in hearty congratulation, and the old clergyman wept upon his shoulder, and the daughter kissed his hand. Many who had avoided him after his fall, now came forward and shook him by the hand. But the mass of refined society held back, and the Christians of the churches left the Christians of God alone to whisper consolation to his lonely, refined heart.

The power of opinion in society and the churches is omnipotent, and yet when closely investigated by the eye of candor, it is found to originate in the prejudices or the earnest convictions of the strong intellects or wills of the few, who, by the mere force of assertion, drag others into the whirlpool of truth or error. The gift of originality and strong will is a limited gift. Hence the few influential leaders in society or religion incur fearful responsibility to God if they guide others into the violation of the sublime charity and brotherhood inculcated by the Divine Teacher of Galilee. His teachings were not congenial to the proverbs and wise thrifty maxims which accumulate wealth and secure power.

He hurled orthodoxy from its throne, because orthodoxy arrogated to itself the sole right to wear the genuine livery of heaven, while devoid of the lowliness of heart and universal love of men, without which that heaven would be only an assembly of proud, aristocratic formalists. Churches gradually assume the form and character of citadels from which crusades are organized against other churches, to steal proselytes ; or from which periodical forays of a limited and sectarian character are made upon the really poor and suffering with the like purpose of proselytism. This was never the religion of Christ. The Good Shepherd's attentions were principally directed to the irregular, wandering sheep who contrived to keep out of the regular fold. The Shepherd turned his back upon the regulars and went after the heretic, and appeared strongly to love him best. The Master was surrounded by the abandoned and the suffering, who had always been separate from the orthodox ; and the assertions of all the priestcraft in Christendom can never make the fact obscure, or dim its celestial brightness. The good God loves all !

How much, then, was Clarence Rutherford entitled to the society and assistance of his peers, since his own personal acts were devoid of shame. He was a sinless sufferer, and yet Christians turned their backs on him. They made him suffer reproach for others' sins. Thank God, the Church is not infallible which turns away from innocence, and makes it drag its weary life alone to a grave of despair. The Eternal may visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, but Christ never directed His followers to do it.

Such were the convictions of the Rev. Charles Heron, as he stood at the door of the court-house waiting for the out-cast, that he might conduct him from the scene of his legal triumph to a seat beside his own daughter, in the sleigh which was to bear him to a sumptuous repast at the rectory.

Curious eyes followed the trio, as the sleigh glided down the street, and earnest hearts secretly blessed the clergyman

who so fearlessly espoused the cause of the unfortunate. But there was another class of spectators who looked coldly or sneeringly on this determined and independent act of Christian charity; and while their eyes were hardly dry of the tears which earnest, burning oratory had elicited, they reinstated their old prejudice against the fatherless upon its pedestal. Slaves of public opinion, they were incapable of appreciating the pure charity and fearlessness of the man of God, and preferred to range themselves under the pleasant banner of the popular. Such men and such women—and they are numbered by thousands in every community—appear to forget that Christ came to place His followers in antagonism towards the world, and its maxims and prejudices. The probabilities are, that a popular and fiery persecution of all who bear the Christian name would find such persons hastening to deny their faith for the sake of being on the safe and comfortable side of power.

But, unmindful of the malignant and the worldly, the sleigh, with its congenial occupants, dashed down the principal thoroughfare of the town towards a place of shelter from the rapidly increasing snow-storm. The snow-flakes, which had trembled slowly and at long intervals downward from the sky, now were replaced by thickly falling flakes like feathers, which soon covered the sleighing party with mantles of white. Over the fences and the trees they whirled and tossed, weaving fantastic shapes among the network of the branches, and clinging reluctantly to the outlines of the gate-posts, or forming on their tops caps, and capitals, and entablatures of white. Every dark and misshapen object which met the eye was soon concealed and crowned in white, and the snow-king proclaimed his power in concord with the coming night. The shroud of the snow-king and the pall of night fell together over the departed day.

Rutherford was studying the rosy beauty of Marie, enveloped in her furs, when the darkness fell. She appeared unusually animated and beautiful, and every accent that fell

from her lips seemed joyous and spirited. She had emerged from the crowded court-room with increased confidence in the powers and truthfulness of the young orator, and with a firmer determination to stand by her father in his effort to give the young lawyer position in society. She had already won over a female friend to their side by her persuasive eloquence, and that friend had been strengthened in his favor by an accidental interview with him at the clergyman's house. He had then appeared in one of his happiest moods, brilliant and full of spirited repartee. Marie's interest in him had been on the increase ever since the memorable ride. She had resolved to befriend him, not from the exalted motive of her father, but on account of the satisfaction his society afforded her sentimental and intellectual nature. No young man of her neighborhood, or indeed of her acquaintance, could compare with him intellectually. No one appeared so perfectly appreciative of her poetic and delicate tastes. No one understood so well as he the art of developing the beautiful ideas which sprang from her brain, by comparing and contrasting them with the recorded thoughts of the eminent writers of all ages. If other and more tender sympathies than those of taste and intellect found lodgment in her heart, she was as yet unconscious of them. She flew to his society as the bird flies to the fountain. At the clear spring of his genius she quaffed delicious freshness and purity of thought; then, like that bird, she raised her lips and heart to Heaven and trilled forth louder and clearer notes of song.

The party reached the rectory just at the moment the servant was lighting the lamps for the evening. The dinner was in readiness for their arrival, and they found Marie's lady friend already arrived and comfortably seated before the coal fire in the parlor. To Rutherford, the needy occupant of the small and uncarpeted office, the genteel luxury of the rectory appeared like a paradise. The large sofas, the padded easy-chairs, the elegant engravings and bronzes, the embroidery screens, and the rich patterns of the carpet, all illumined by the mellow

light of the astral lamps, suggested ideas of comfort which he had feared were passed away for ever for him. Then the easy and informal hospitality of the clergyman, as he presided over the sumptuous entertainment which had been arranged expressly for the lawyer's benefit, brought back vividly the recollection of the elegance and abundance of the table to which he had been accustomed from infancy. He did not repine, however, at his fallen condition. The impression had become strongly rooted in his mind that Heaven had interposed kindly in his behalf, and that a splendid destiny awaited him. Oh! who shall fathom the depth and the power of an encouraging word spoken at the right time? Who shall trace its influence upon the lives of those who, through evil reproach and mountain obstacles, have forced their weary way and marked their names in letters of gold upon the arch of history and humanity!

At length the dinner was over, and all returned again to the cheerful glow of the parlor fire. The clergyman took up the daily paper, and was soon engrossed in the affairs of the outer world. The lawyer seated himself beside Miss Warner, the other guest, on the sofa, while Marie retired for a few moments to look after the affairs of the house, of which she was sole mistress. She was detained longer than she had anticipated, and when she returned at length to the room where her guests were seated, she witnessed a scene which checked the exuberant flow of her feelings, made her conscious of emotions which had nestled secretly and unknown in her heart, and developed the poetic, lovely girl in an instant, into the real woman.

The clergyman had gone out and left his guests alone. Marie entered the parlor with her habitual noiseless tread, and her approach was unnoticed by the two. Rutherford's back was towards the door, and Miss Warner was facing him, and eagerly listening to his remarks. Her eyes were studying his features with the rapt, fascinated gaze of beauty, held captive by intellect. Her cheek was flushed by

excitement, and, occasionally, her eyelashes drooped in the intensity of the lawyer's look. A sensation of pain or apprehension, a novel feeling of chagrin or disappointment, flashed across Marie's heart. What if he should love that girl? What if her charms had already ensnared him? The strange emotion or consciousness grew in intensity the longer she contemplated the absorption of the two in each other's society. What interest could she have in his heart entanglements? Her surprised maiden nature withdrew timidly into itself. Her heart fluttered at the thought that she could feel otherwise than kindly towards Miss Warner. But most assuredly, at that moment, her feelings in regard to her experienced a revulsion. How dared that girl to be so absorbed in him, holding him in her gaze as if he was unconscious of any other existence! She had read of that singular passion which allows no community of interest in regard to its idol—that absorbing emotion which veils reason and generosity—but she had never dreamed that a person under its influence could become bitter, as she felt that instant towards the young lady who sat there so unconscious of her presence. The illusion, which had fallen as a mist over her young existence, that she regarded Rutherford as an intellectual and cultivated friend only, vanished at the sudden touch of jealousy. The new consciousness came like the lightning, and was instantly followed by that strange instinct of concealment which sends the wounded bird fluttering into the thicket.

She advanced rapidly into the presence of the two occupants of the sofa, and said, gaily:

“Pardon me for my absence. It was unavoidable. Do you enjoy music, Mr. Rutherford? If so, my friend Miss Warner has a pleasure in reserve for you, of which you little dream.”

Miss Warner, of course, protested that she was only moderately gifted in the musical line. But the lawyer pronounced his decided partiality for the muse, and would hear of no

refusal from her. After the customary preliminaries of persuasion, and protestation, and reluctant consent, Marie Heron brought out her harp, and her friend proceeded, with cultivated touch and rare skill, to delight her listeners by eliciting its sweetest melodies. She was familiar with nearly everything he called for, and song after song was warbled forth by her powerful voice. He expressed his appreciation of her musical treat, and, in response to her request, joined her in several familiar airs. Turning, at length, to the quiet mistress of the dwelling, who was reclining in dreamy reverie against the back of a large rocking-chair, studying the fire grottoes of the grate, and, occasionally, beating time with her foot upon the carpet, he requested an exhibition of her musical powers.

With an abstracted, listless air, she drew the harp towards her, and asked what was his favorite song. He answered, by soliciting the performance of her own favorite instead, remarking, with a smile, that it would of course be a love-song.

"No, it will not;" she replied, with a return of her usual gaiety. "There are higher and nobler qualities than love, as you will presently admit. I wish my voice could follow my soul in this song."

With a slight toss of her head, she threw back her curls, and swept her hand lightly across the chords. The touch appeared to satisfy her keen sense of harmony, for she paused a moment, and said: "This song is called 'The Polish Poet's Prayer.'"

With a low, faint whisper of melody, the scene opened in a starlight evening in Poland's valleys. A youth was kneeling upon his sword on the greensward, and a few armed warriors knelt behind him with uncovered heads. The harp trembled forth the humility and pathos of the opening prayer, that God would bless them in the coming battle, but not with victory—no, that was hopeless; the iron hand of the tyrant was fast grinding them down. Their homes and

native valleys were doomed to slavery, and they were going forth to die on the sacred soil of their ruined country. The agonized tones of Gethsemane broke forth from the harp, in union with the voice of the young girl, whose eyes looked heavenward. "O God! may our blood enrich the soil! Aye! may the memory of the life so freely to be offered spring from the grass, when our young boys and maidens pass, and nerve them to wear ever in their hearts the longing and the undying hope of freedom! May Poland be to the nations the Christ of Liberty, bearing His bloody cross through fields of agony, rising and falling, and rising and falling again only to teach the nations the sublimity of suffering and agony endured for every holy cause."

The listeners bent forward in tearful interest, as the lips of the singer quivered in that upward glance of prayer, and the harp murmured in unison.

"But truth and liberty shall never die." The words broke forth from her sweet lips like an angel's clarion notes, and the harp-strings twanged out thrilling strains of triumphant harmony. "When we are dead, Poland shall live; the sacrifice shall be complete, and the bright crown fall upon her head whom we have loved so well."

The notes of victory pierced to the sky, and then Marie stood motionless and radiant as an angel of prophecy. Turning, with a smile, to Rutherford, she asked if love was the loftiest passion of humanity?

"I have always fancied that it was," he said, "until now. But you have shaken my belief. I am confident that, with your face and voice, you could move a nation to arms."

"You are disposed to be complimentary, to-night, Mr. Rutherford," she said, with a tone that indicated perfect indifference to his flattery, and, relinquishing her harp, she turned away to her portfolio, to show her guests some sketches of the highlands which she had made in the past summer.

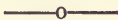
"I recognise this cliff," said Miss Warner, turning over

the loose papers of the portfolio. "I have sailed near it often. But you have something on the top of it that looks like human life, and that surely cannot be accurate, for the cliff is inaccessible. Perhaps that is only a matter of your fancy to heighten the effect."

"No," said Marie, "it *is* correct. One evening when I was quietly sketching, and the atmosphere was unusually clear, I saw a human figure moving on the very summit. I thought, at first, I must be mistaken; but, upon moving my position, and bringing the object directly between me and the sky, I was confident that it moved. Observing the strange apparition for a long time, I became satisfied that it was a human being, and sketched it in my drawing just as it appeared to me. You see it is a human being, but whether man or woman, I could not tell. What do you think of the matter, Mr. Rutherford? Could anybody possibly attain the summit of that rock unless in a balloon. Why, what is the matter with you? You color up like a girl."

The lawyer was disconcerted by the abruptness of her appeal to his judgment. For a moment he stammered and was at a loss what to answer. The cliff was the identical one where he had tempted God by straining so terribly upon his thread of existence, and moreover in regard to its accessibility he had promised Nora Rudd to remain for ever silent. Finally he managed to stammer forth something to the effect that it was always spoken of as inaccessible, and that any man would be a lunatic who attempted to scale it. He passed immediately to other sketches in the portfolio, and commenced to descant earnestly upon their merits. Both his embarrassment had been too palpable to the quick eyes of both ladies; and when, after a few minutes, he had taken his departure, they failed not to exchange opinions in regard to his singular deportment under so simple an interrogatory. It was the first instance where his language and manner had been other than open, and candid, and self-possessed.

After the young ladies had retired to their room for the night, Marie lay awake a long time thinking of the occurrences of that day. She had learned the secret of her own heart—she had witnessed Rutherford's legal ability, and for the first time had seen him mysterious. What in her sketch and simple question could have caused his strange embarrassment? The more she pondered the matter, the keener grew her curiosity, and the firmer her determination to probe the mystery. If in her character there was one stronger love than the love of mystery, it was a passion for persistent and skilful effort to unravel the web of reticence and obscurity in which some people are prone to envelop themselves. Here was her hero, a man of mysterious parentage, by a single blush suddenly associated with the contents of her own portfolio. Was it not worth an effort to unravel the matter? Her love should remain ever a secret. But in regard to that noble, suffering, persecuted genius, she must and would know everything. It was due to her own self respect and sense of propriety in giving away her heart's treasure.



CHAPTER XI.

"THIS is such a dreary Christmas, grandpa. Santa Claus won't come this time—do you think he will?" The little inquirer turned his pitiful emaciated face from the window-pane where he had long been contemplating the driving snow-storm, to the old man who sat in an arm-chair near the fire, which was slowly and with flickering blaze consuming his last stick of wood. The grandfather looked sadly up from his painful meditations, and his dejected, care-worn air indicated that hope had long since spread her departing wings.

"No, my child. I fear old Santa Claus has deserted us this time."

He glanced at the little ragged stocking which the child

had hung on the chimney the night before. This touching evidence of the little fellow's faith in the coming of the good saint, brought tears to his eyes, and he tried to brush them covertly away. But the boy detected them, and his bare feet came patting along the floor to the arm-chair.

"Don't cry, grandpa. I don't care much about this Christmas. I can wait till next time."

He climbed up on the old man's knee and put his arms caressingly about his neck.

"Don't cry, grandpa. Indeed you mustn't."

The action and tenderness of the boy caused the tears to flow faster. Old memories were crowding upon his mind, and, contrasting the happy and comfortable days, when the grandmother had lived and gladdened the boy's heart with well crammed Christmas stockings and hearty dinners, with the desolation and starvation of this bleak, pitiless day, he found his old heart almost ready to break. No meal had graced their table, and the day was nearly gone. The night shadows were gathering, and the cold was increasing with the violence of the storm. When that small flickering fire was gone out, they could creep supperless to bed, to awaken to a fireless and lonely day of hunger. Rheumatism had held the old man for several days a prisoner in his house.

For the sake of the hungry and disappointed child, he made an effort and spoke calmly again.

"It looks mighty gloomy for us this time—don't it, Bobby? But we must keep a stout heart to fight our way through this rough old world. When I was a boy like you, my father's house burnt up one winter night, and we all had to run half-naked through the snow. You see how good God has been to leave us this comfortable roof over our heads. We might be worse off than this, my boy. Just think; our gracious Lord and Master had no place to lay His sacred head."

"Didn't he have nothing to eat?" inquired the child, anxiously.

"No; nothing," replied the old man. "He hadn't even a

drink of water. When he asked for water, they gave him something bitter and disagreeable to drink."

The boy looked thoughtfully into the fire for a moment. Then he shivered and said :

"Fire's most gone. Then how cold it will be." Suddenly he looked up into his grandfather's face. A bright thought had struck him :

"Grandma used to say when you're in trouble read in the old Bible ; let's do it, grandpa—shall we ?"

"Yes," said the old man, hopelessly again. "That's all that's left us now."

The boy climbed down to the floor again, and ran pattering across the room for the book. It was lying in the window, where he had been gazing out into the storm. He brought it to his grandfather, and then seating himself on a stool, said :

"Where shall I read ?"

"Open it without looking," was the reply, "and read just there."

The boy shut his eyes and opened the volume. Then looking down, he read slowly and with difficulty these startling lines : "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies : thou anointest my head with oil : my cup runneth over."

"That must be mere accident," said the old man, nervously ; "open at another place, Bobby."

The boy closed his eyes again, and opened the book.

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee : for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."

The trembling old man put his hand on the head of the boy, and said solemnly :

"That will do, Bobby ; I believe that, from the bottom of my soul. Kneel down, my child, beside your old grandfather while he prays to God, and join your little voice in the

prayer. God is going to send us everything we need, if we can only pray earnestly and humbly to Him. Kneel down, Bobby."

The little anxious sufferer obeyed this direction, and laid his face on the old man's knee, as the voice of supplication arose to the merciful Father of all. The last stick of wood had turned into a long glowing coal, and now suddenly fell apart. It was unnoticed in the intensity of prayer with which these lonely beings besieged the throne of God. The supplication went on, and the glow of the coals waxed fainter and fainter, and slowly the thin veil of ashes gathered over their brightness. The voices of the driving storm sounded louder, and the sleet commenced to dash against the windows. The darkness enveloped the little house without, and the dying embers glared feebly on the walls within. But the more appalling the night appeared, and the more helpless the isolation of the sufferers seemed, the brighter and holier gleamed the star of faith and prayer.

"There comes God," exclaimed the startled child, raising his head as a knock sounded upon the door. His grandfather, unheeding the sound, prayed on louder and more earnestly. The wind whistled violently by; then wailing and moaning, it reversed its course, and dashed the sleet with a loud rattle against the glass. The child clung closer to the suppliant and listened. Again that mysterious rap upon the door. The old man finished his prayer, and raising his head, exclaimed: "In the name of God, come in!"

The door opened, and the snow whirled into the dark apartment. A muffled figure, tall and indistinctly revealed, strode quickly in and closed the door against the storm. The darkness seemed to bewilder the intruder. "Welcome, stranger," said the proprietor of the house; "I have no light; but you are welcome."

"Don't you recognise me, Nathan Weaver?" said a female voice. "I never thought you could forget *me*."

"Merciful God! it is my friend, the lady Nora. A thou-

sand blessings on your head. Run, Bobby, and get the old lady a chair—quick, lad, quick.”

Nora Rudd advanced to the faintly-lighted hearth, and took the offered seat. She drew it to the old man’s side and took his hand.

“Did you think I could ever forget you, old man? No, indeed. I have brought you a fine Christmas dinner. It is under your shed with my horse. And oh! I have news that will brighten your old heart. I have charge of ‘The Glen’ in behalf of the young widow, Mrs. Baltimore, and listen now; you, and you only, are to be the gardener again. I have the selection of all the servants, and you are to go back to your old place. All the flowers and greenhouses pass once more into your keeping, and all your old improvements are to be listened to, and will probably be adopted. Cheer up—cheer up. What’s the matter with you, old man; can’t you speak?”

He was choking, gasping for breath. His hands grasped wildly about in the air. Then he grew calmer, but he could not speak. At last he whispered:

“It will pass—it will pass. It is too much joy for the old man. Don’t be frightened, Bobby; it will soon pass.”

Finally he recovered his voice, and said reverently: “Bless the God and Father of the friendless, for He has done this. Oh! give that little boy a mouthful of bread—the bread which has come down from heaven.”

Little Bobby crept to the side of the tall woman and clutched her dress. “Did you come down from heaven, too? Grandpa knew the bread was coming. He said everything we needed was comin’, and oh, I’m so glad. I’m so hungry.”

“Hungry!” exclaimed Nora in astonishment, grasping the child in her arms and trying to make out his features in the faint light of the dying coals.

“You do not mean to say, Nathan Weaver, that you have absolutely been destitute of bread.”

“Aye,” replied the old man, “I can say all of that truth-

fully enough. There was no work that a feeble old man like me could do. These people about here who have small places don't appreciate the kind of gardening I've been used to, and then they're very close about spending money for fancy gardening. The Baltimores, and the Fentons, and the Marshalls, and the like of them, was very different people to deal with. When 'The Glen' was shut up, and the old gentleman discharged me, I found all the big folks had gardeners, as many as they wanted; and I had to pick up a little work here, and a little work there. But in the winters I suffered a good deal. And now this winter my roomatiz has broke me up completely. Little Bobby and me was just on the pint of starvin'. But we have been praying to a God hearing, and a God answering prayer; and while the prayer was on our very lips, in comes my lady Nora and answers it."

"Hush!" said she, putting her finger on his lips; "don't call me by that title again; have you forgotten your promise?"

"It was forgetful of me to do it," he replied, abashed; "but it seems mighty hard sometimes to bridle my tongue. But tell me; what sort of lady is this new mistress of 'The Glen?' Her father always seemed to me a fine gentleman, and he bore a good name among his servants—so I heard from Margaret, my daughter, who was this little boy's mother."

"I'll tell you all about that as soon as I can bring in your dinner and make you comfortable. Have you any candle or any fuel?"

"Neither one nor the other," replied Weaver. "We have come to a pretty hard pass, I can tell you."

"To-morrow you shall have a cord of wood sawed and split," said Nora. "In the meantime I will take the old axe that lies under your shed and knock off some of the fence boards to make you a fire. I will have all made right to-morrow, so that your landlord won't complain. I'm going

to hire you right away and put you in one of the workshops of 'The Glen,' where you can make yourself useful at once. Now for your dinner. Little boy, bring out your table and put it near the fire; I will make it groan before many minutes."

Saying this, Nora went out again into the storm. In a few minutes she returned with two large covered baskets, and giving little Bobby a leg of a cold chicken to stay his appetite, went out again after the fuel. In the pauses of the storm her axe could be heard dashing against the doomed fence, and before Bobby had succeeded in cleaning his large chicken-bone, she returned with an armful of dry wood and flung it upon the floor. She soon recalled the dying embers to life, and her kindling-wood commenced to burn. Higher and higher blazed the cheering flame as she gradually piled on the combustible fragments of the fence. Higher and higher rose the spirits of the old man and child in the genial radiance. Little Bobby stole quietly to his grandfather's knee, still grasping his precious bone, and whispered:

"She must have come from heaven—don't you think so?"

"God sent her, my child, in answer to our prayer, no doubt," replied Weaver, beginning to experience relief in his rheumatic limbs as the warmth of the pine materials rapidly spread over the room.

Nora, intent upon her charitable mission, paid no heed to their conversation, but went on in the preparation of the dinner. She ransacked the cupboard for dishes and cooking utensils. Frying-pans and saucepans were dragged out from their long concealment and washed, and then placed upon the fire with various cold fowls and vegetables to be warmed over. And a huge turkey, already cooked to a handsome brown, was taken from a basket and suspended before the fire by a string, to be made piping hot for the dinner.

While the meats were warming, the old nurse produced pies and apples and nuts, from one of the wonderful baskets, and laid them aside for their dessert. At the sight of every

new delicacy, as it emerged from the baskets, little Bobby would clap his hands in glee and hurry across the apartment to inform his grandfather. Christmas had come, sure enough, for his poor, tired, hungry little body; and his emaciated countenance was lighted with the sweetest expression of expectation and happiness, as he danced about Nora.

At last everything was in readiness, and the steaming viands were placed upon the table. A fresh supply of fuel was flung upon the fire to serve as a substitute for candles, and the arm-chair of old Weaver was drawn to the head of the table. Nora sat opposite to him, and the face of Bobby just reached above the board at one side, 'as he sat in a low seat, which was the best that could be arranged for him. At a glance from Nora, the old man leaned forward solemnly to say grace. His voice was husky, and clearing it, he made a second attempt. The words were tremulous and could not be heard. He made a third attempt, and burst into tears. His emotion was overpowering, and he bade ^q Nora say grace for him. She bent her face downward and obeyed his request. At the conclusion, he pronounced a tremulous "Amen."

Then the repast was quickly made way with, for it was the first meal of that day. Christmas closed upon that lonely family in contentment and cheer; and when Bobby had finished his hearty meal, and sat down upon the little stool beside the roaring, crackling fire, and listened to the storm without, he said: "Grandpa, if Santa Claus had only come it would be all right, wouldn't it?"

"How do you know he hasn't come?" replied Weaver. "That stocking looks mighty fat to me." Bobby glanced upward at the forgotten token of his faith. His eyes opened to wondrous dimensions as the stocking met his gaze. Somebody had surely been tampering with it. It had swelled to aldermanic proportions. He walked timidly up to it, and then, as the first symptoms of his surprise passed away, the sweetest of smiles wreathed his little mouth, and

he exclaimed: "Darlin' old Santa Claus, he never did forgit little Bobby."

While the child explored the mysteries of the stocking, Nora cleared away the table, and then drew her chair to the side of the old gardener, to satisfy his inquiries in regard to the character and expectations of the new mistress of "The Glen." He had grown up almost from childhood in the employ of the Baltimore family, and he considered himself personally concerned in the chagrin and disappointment which possessed the relatives of that family upon learning of the total alienation of "The Glen" estate from their blood. Nora proceeded to give him her opinion of the young widow.

"I want you to like the new mistress," she said. "Grace Traver endeared herself to me from infancy; I had the sole charge of her until that strange marriage. And I will say that a truer-hearted girl never existed. She had her faults, but they arose from her impetuous nature. No one was ever more prompt and sincere in confessing that they had done wrong. No one was ever more willing to make reparation. She appeared to be unusually fond of the heroic and the fearless. Sometimes when she was occupied with her lessons, and one of her father's wild horses chanced to pass by her window in grazing, she has, to my utter amazement, dashed aside her book, sprung through the window, and with a leap gained the horse's back, and clinging to his mane, rushed through the meadows like an insane person. In a few minutes she would come walking in with a heightened color, and exclaim: 'Forgive me, Nora, for being so rude and neglecting my lesson; but that horse looked exactly as if he thought he had thrown off all authority, and I just wanted to teach him that he did have a mistress. Now I will be ever so good.'

"Then she would glance so mischievously up at me out of those dark eyes, that I hadn't the heart to rebuke her. Indeed, I generally was forced to laugh in spite of myself.

She had an independent way, too, of expressing her opinions concerning the characters she met with in her history lessons. She generally criticized pretty sharply those personages whom everybody likes in history. She would glean facts from the book she was reading, and then place these persons in so ludicrous a light that all reverence for them was lost. She never appeared to fancy men whose great deeds were strongly tinged with self-interest. But exhibit to her men and women who had been palpably self-sacrificing, and she would instantly write down their names, and say, 'I must study them further.' I fear it was under the impression that she was herself doing some such noble act, that she consented to marry Mr. Baltimore.

"There is another element in her disposition that I wish you, Weaver, particularly to remember. Never, under any circumstances, attempt to flatter her personally. You can always obtain any concession from her that is reasonable by respectful request. But if you pay compliments to her, you will see her become reserved, and the chances are that she will suspect you of base motives. She is a little mysterious, too, at times ; and when she sets out to conceal her feelings or her plans, I defy the sharpest intellect to fathom her. Mind, I am speaking to you of her when she was only fifteen. Time and experience may have modified some of her peculiarities. Are you listening to me?"

"Yes, yes, lady Nora. I beg your pardon ; Nora, I mean. I hear all you say, and trust me, I shall make no mistakes. But this troubles me, from your talk. If she is such a wild, hasty creature as you say, how is she going to keep up the dignity of the old family on that place? That's what bothers me. I should think *you* wouldn't like to witness any letting down in the old manners of the place."

Old Weaver looked keenly at her in the firelight, but no change of countenance was visible in that self-possessed being as she replied :

"No fear of her lacking dignity, Weaver ; you'll see enough

of that before you have known her long. She is inclined to reserve in the presence of those who are not familiar with her. But you must not allow my words to prejudice you against the new mistress. I am sure you will love her upon acquaintance. But——”

Nora paused a moment in doubt, and then continued :

“I must trust you, Weaver, with a certain matter that you can understand better than any one else. Can I rely upon your doing a secret service for me at ‘The Glen?’”

“How can you doubt it?” was the instantaneous and frank reply of the gardener. “You have been so kind to me, so considerate to an old man’s feelings, I will serve you sooner than any person alive, be he man or woman.”

“I was confident of it, Weaver. Now, all your skill and discretion will be called into exercise. You recollect the unfortunate mother of Mrs. Granville, don’t you?”

“Indeed I do,” replied the gardener, with increasing interest of manner. “Who should remember her if I didn’t? The sweetest lady that ever walked she was.”

“Well,” continued Nora, “she is at ‘The Glen.’”

“How is that?” asked the astounded listener. “At ‘The Glen?’ Is she herself again? Why don’t she go to her daughter? What call has she to ‘The Glen?’”

Nora looked earnestly at the gardener, and said, in a low tone, that the boy might not hear: “She is not recovered; she is worse. But she has escaped, and we have concealed her at the old house. There she is to remain, and I want you to keep her hid there till we can make some other disposition of her. She has been cruelly treated, and we are resolved that they shall not have her again.”

This reply was greeted by a low whistle of surprise from Weaver. He glanced at Bobby. The little fellow, who had been playing with his Christmas toys on the hearth, was just at that moment stretching himself on the floor, at full length, for a sleep. When his grandfather saw that his eyes were shut in unconsciousness, he answered Nora :

"This is a strange affair. This whole business puzzles me. But who knows about it, and what am I to do?"

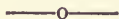
She related the whole affair of the rescue to him, and added: "I expect you to occupy the rooms in the workshop which I am having fitted up for you. In one of those rooms I want you to keep the lunatic secretly confined, and see to it that no one has access to her but her daughter at night."

"I will do your pleasure," he answered, slowly, "and do the best I can: but it is going to be a hard task. Never mind, I'll do it for you."

"Then," said Nora, rising to go, "I will send my sleigh for you and your little boy to-morrow, and will give you further instructions when you arrive at 'The Glen.'"

In a few seconds more the tall figure vanished through the door, and the gardener was left alone with his sleeping grandchild. He sat a long time meditating upon the matter, and then hobbled about the room preparatory to retiring to his bed. Occasionally he muttered to himself:

"She has taken a difficult task on herself—she can't stand it—no! no! It will break her down after awhile, sure."



CHAPTER XII.

THE summer of —— will long be remembered as a season of suffering and horror. The death-angel held almost undisputed sway. He visited the hut and the mansion with impartial and rapid tread; and where he entered, faces grew thin and pale, and bright eyes glazed and closed for ever. Where the spectre was least expected, he noiselessly came. The ruddy cheek and the robust frame were no better protection than the sickly face and the emaciated figure. He waved his sceptre over the ball-room, and the fair girl suddenly grew livid; her smile died on her lips; she bade adieu to her admirers, and followed the dreadful messenger out

to her grave. The quiet student, at midnight, looked fearfully up from his book when he heard the slight tap at his door. Too well he understood the dread summons, and turned in vain to the little red vial upon his mantelpiece, hoping to thrust it successfully in the face of the grim monitor. Alas! drugs seemed to have lost their virtue in the passing anger of heaven; and he, too, followed sadly at last. Away down the streets of the busy and hurrying mart the death-angel passed; and as he looked behind the desk of the counting-room the banker shivered, and whispered to God to grant him one more year to repent and employ his stewardship in the sole service of heaven. "Too late, too late!" moaned the sere conscience; and the golden sceptre, which was worshipped on the street, passed away from him for ever. The faithful Christian was surprised in the midst of his usefulness, and his lamp of charity quickly extinguished and snatched away from his hand, to be replaced by a golden harp in the mansion of his Father. Oh! it was a sad sight to witness the god of this world hurled from his pedestal in so many hearts, and a God of fear only substituted in his place. But, unmindful of the saint's hope and the sinner's fear, the awful pestilence held on its ghastly way. The faithful physicians met and grappled it at every turn, then fell themselves corpses at its touch. Another class of healers, the physicians of the soul, the ministers and priests of the altar, who flee not when the wolf cometh, were at their posts too. They poured the balm of Gilead into the sick and weary souls of men, and when death came it found many of their patients ready.

Foremost and zealous among the clergy who nursed the convalescents and blessed the dying, moved the Rev. Charles Heron. No toil, no sacrifice, no weary watching, no nursing was able to break his indomitable will, or shiver his priestly lamp of faithfulness and devotion. Enveloped in the armor of his martyred master's zeal, he faced the dread cholera, and his blazing faith was the sword that

warded off from himself the blows of the white death. In the early morning he bowed before God, and wrestled in prayer for the grant of human lives, and immortal souls; and then rising, he walked forth in the majesty of his priestly mission, to aid the perishing with care and comfort and religion. Oh! how sublime a thing it is to minister to suffering humanity in the name of Jesus. The poor, the lowly, the rich, the intellectual, the emaciated of every grade, in their pale agony listened anxiously for his coming footsteps, and his angelic countenance of cheer. A light gleamed in his devoted eyes which moved the agonized children of men to yearn to kiss his outstretched hand.

One sultry summer evening, while the cholera was at its height, and men were falling before its advance like grass at the scythe of the mower, the clergyman stood at his front door in the glare of the sunset, in the act of bidding his darling daughter farewell for the night. He was just going out on his mission of love to the sick. Marie, in her pure white dress, with its narrow belt of blue, was standing before him, looking up into his face with her pleading eyes. She had been entreating him to spare himself for only one night. He looked so pale and worn out.

"No, daughter, I must visit that helpless family this evening. They are all sick, and no one cares for them. Do not be alarmed if I stay away several hours. I do not believe I am intended for the cholera's grasp. I have escaped so often, that I trust God designs me for a nurse until the end. Good-bye, my darling; remember me in your prayers to-night, together with all this suffering community."

He strained her to his heart, and then pressing a kiss on her pure forehead, he was gone. She watched his retiring figure until he was lost in the distance. Then she closed the door, and walked slowly and softly up-stairs to her room. She appeared to be more delicate than usual, but the spiritual type was really an improvement to her beauty. But there was an increased dreaminess, an effect of far-off

musings in her eyes, which suggested the idea of melancholy. Some severe disappointment might have swept its dark wings across her young life. Or it might be that she was over-anxious and alarmed about the spread of the pestilence, as it concerned her father, or perhaps herself. Whatever the cause of the faint shadow in her eyes might be, it is certain the unhappy expression lingered long. When she reached her room, and sat gazing out of the open window at the sunset, the shadowy expression deepened with the fall of night. Not more motionless were the hushed leaves of the trees beneath her than was Marie in her day-dream.

But abstracted as she seemed, and so oblivious of the present, it nevertheless was beyond the range of possibility for one of her temperament to be present long at such a grand parade of the clouds, without awaking to a sense of the snowy grandeur of the scene. She did appreciate at length, and leaned forward over the window-sill. The vast volume of white, foamy clouds, which so long had hovered over the western horizon, with a fringe of silver light extending along their summits, now slowly rolled upwards towards the north, forming in their course a perfect stairway of snow-steps, with the silver fringe lingering along the western edge of each successive step as it was unfolded. At length the stairway was complete against a background of blue sky and golden sunlight. Up such a flight of vapory steps angels might fitly tread. Lower and lower dropped the god of day, and the blue sky dissolved into a vast ocean of molten gold, and the snow-steps slowly moving asunder, formed into purple likenesses of vessels floating upon that sea of radiance. Fainter and fainter grew the sunlight, and darker seemed the purple ships passing away into the western ocean. Deeper and lower fell the shadow over the young girl's soul as she strained her eyes towards the fading pageant; and she prayed silently, prayed eagerly, that God would deem it wise to bear away her soul, now and for ever, upon a purple barque, gliding away upon that mystic ocean.

A change had come over the spirit of her young dream. To live seemed not so tempting as before. She, whose soul was ever full of brilliant images, whose life seemed wreathed with every enticing motive to hope and enjoy, was a changed being. She was conscious of the fact. She realized that every gift of intellect, and every means of sensual enjoyment, might be present to her, and yet the heart be alone and poverty-stricken still. Secretly, timidly she loved, and no sun of hope had yet arisen upon that love. Would it not be better to die now than to live with this hopeless affection clinging to her, and slowly eating away her life? Would it be proper to request of heaven peace and rest now? Or was God offended that she dared to hope even for death, when so many opportunities of serving Him still remained to her? These questions rapidly were asked of her conscience by her heart. And under the influence of such thoughts she had whispered her petition that she might die now, if it was consistent with the will of God. She believed that this novel, engrossing emotion, love, would be the only love, the only outgushing tide of tenderness she would ever experience. She was as yet unaware that this is the delusion which enfolds all lovers, this belief in the eternity of the present love. But, whatever the philosophy of human affection may be, it was certain that she was a poor, desolate, loving girl, full of heart-tenderness, full of loveliness of person and understanding, and worthy to be any man's devoted wife. Hopeless and desolate she leaned out of her window in the shadows of the approaching night.

Suddenly she heard a ringing at the street door bell, loud and urgent, apparently. She looked down upon the doorsteps, and saw her family physician standing there. A shock went to her heart. What if her father had been taken down with the cholera? She hastened down to open the door herself.

"Is your father in, Marie?" was the first sentence that greeted her.

When informed of the clergyman's absence, the doctor expressed himself greatly disappointed. He had just left young Rutherford, very low with the cholera, and utterly alone. The attendance of nurses was difficult to procure. Everybody was so alarmed about his own health. The physician had counted confidently upon the clergyman's assistance in the lawyer's case. He was reputed to be his only friend.

"I thought it but a mere act of humanity, any way, to call and endeavor to get some one interested in the poor fellow. He will likely die anyhow. But I am driven now with my calls, and must leave. Good-bye, Marie. Don't *you* get sick through apprehension and excitement. That is very apt to bring the disease on. Keep cool, my sweet girl, and there is no danger for you. Perhaps your father may return in time to help the poor fellow."

The kind doctor jerked out these words in his peculiar nervous manner, as he hurried down the steps and was gone.

Marie retreated to the parlor sofa, and buried her face in her hands. "Poor, dear fellow, dying alone; in all his matchless eloquence and power, dying alone—O my God! shall I die alone—with no kind hand—no kind word?"

The tears choked her utterance. She sobbed convulsively. In a few seconds the real woman asserted her independence.

"Fear? What shall I fear? Have they not maligned me already for nothing—no cause—no shadow of a cause; poor fellow; I *will* go to him, though ten worlds should scoff me. Where is a woman's place in such a pestilence as this? I have no family to watch and care for, unless father is taken down. I *will* go—I *will* go. O my Heavenly Father! protect me from evil tongues, and strengthen and guide me."

Her purpose was no sooner taken—her noble, heroic purpose—than she hastened to put it in execution. Ascending to her chamber, she disguised herself. She filled her pocket with little vials of medicine from her father's medicine-chest. Then she hurried down to her pantry, and filled a basket

with such cold remnants of the last dinner as she could find. Bread and butter, knife and fork, spoon and tumbler, also found their place in the basket. Allowing herself no time for the sober second thought, she drew her veil over her face, and hastening to the front door, rang the bell violently. The maid hurried up-stairs at the peremptory sound of the bell.

"Tell father, if he comes back soon; that I shall be gone two or three hours on a sick call." The door closed on the astounded maid, and Marie was off on her errand of mercy.

Good angels speed her, and guard her, for the tread of the pestilence is firm and rapid, and hope hangs on a thread! Away down the dusky street she rapidly sped, fearless and eager, winged by love, guided by instinct, protected by Heaven. The air of the streets was foul, from the neglect occasioned by dread. The only passers on the walks who appeared careless of the pestilence, were the intoxicated. Several funerals passed by on the dimly-lighted streets—funerals with few mourners in the train. How quickly the dead, in times of cholera, are forgotten! The hearses must hasten back from the cemetery for other loads of departed humanity. Unmindful of the dead as they passed, Marie hurried on, heated by the sultry summer air, flushed with exertion, and weary of her heavy basket. Her apparent unconsciousness of insult, and her rapid pace, suggested the idea of low life, and no one molested her. She rapidly turned corners, she availed herself of alleys, and soon reached the open space near the river. It was now quite dark. Looking cautiously back, she saw that no one had followed her. Then she turned to the river, in doubt of her way. A little light glimmered ahead of her. She *felt* that it came from his house. She walked timidly now, and slower. She reached the door and faintly rapped. No answer came. A louder knock elicited no answer. She opened the door cautiously, and looked in. There he lay unconscious, apparently; perhaps he was dead. She stole nearer to the bed with his lamp. He was breathing—*sleeping*.

With her veil pressed back from her face with one hand, and the lamp grasped in the other, she knelt by his low couch and studied his features. How changed he was! So emaciated, so pale, so spiritual. The glorious forehead was there in all its developed power of intellect; but the eyes, those brilliant stars that were ever reflected in her pure soul, how strangely they appeared, closed and sunken! Those lips, from which the clarion words of eloquence had burst upon the souls of men, how painfully compressed they were, and white! Eagerly bending over him, she feasted her eyes on the countenance which had enslaved her heart. No one was near to startle her maiden modesty, no sound met her ear from the street; she was alone with the dying. Suddenly she started up in terror. Hark! to that approaching sound. No; it was only the voice of Rutherford's relative marking the flight of time. How solemnly they vibrated, those heavy bell notes, on the hushed air. She stood erect, with her veil thrown back and the lamp in her hand, listening to them. It was the music of the olden time. It seemed to speak to the very soul. Long, long before Marie was born the melody of the old clock had touched the heart and warned the soul of death's approach. The young had listened to the voice of time, and dreamed it was not meant for them. The aged had bent their white locks, and counted the strokes, and sighed: "How fast time flies!" and yet few of them had deemed it a warning to prepare for the near spirit-land. Regardless of men's indifference, the old monitor had gone on in its repeated challenge to the passing soul from year to year, and its calm face had seen generations of the challenged pass away and die. The bride in her loveliness, with the veil and the orange-wreath, had paused to look in that face, and then passed forgetful on. The mother had lifted the infant that it might feast its wondering baby-eyes on the old marvel, and both mother and child were long since sleeping beneath the sods of the valley. The soldier had studied its face to learn the sad hour of parting from home

and loved ones for the field of death. Lovers had looked up surprised from their low sweet vows and murmurs of bliss, and then parted at the warning-stroke of the musical bell, often for ever. The old clock had looked down on smiles and tears, feuds and re-unions, bridals and deaths, and these were all long since forgotten; and still its mission was not ended, and its sentinel chime went on and on. The mighty and the fearless had succumbed, the aged and the venerable had crumbled into dust, and still the old clock was erect in life and strength, and its solemn music went on. Who knows but the guardian angels in their eagerness had hovered low and whispered to the clock: "Strike louder, clearer, till your notes arouse the slumbering conscience, and prayerful eyes are raised to God. See yonder sleepless one tossing upon his bed, while the distractions of the day are gone. Chime louder and clearer in the night-watches your alarm of the coming of *eternity*."

These were the dreamy musings of the young watcher as she stood listening to the dying vibrations of the clock, with the lamplight full in her serious face. The disguising cloak had fallen unheeded from her shoulders to the floor, and she stood revealed in her white dress with its blue girdle, with an unveiled bonnet only to shade her blonde face. What was her surprise to behold, upon looking down again, two brilliant grey eyes contemplating her loveliness. The noise of the clock had awakened the sleeper, and he opened his eyes upon a picture which seemed to realize his belief in the presence of guardian angels. He attempted to speak, but his voice, from weakness, faded away into a whisper. She knelt beside him again, and heard these feeble words: "I'm so glad you've come. I recognise you now. You are an angel. So lonely—so helpless I have been, that I distrusted God. You can help me, and I may yet live."

"Oh, Mr. Rutherford, if you will tell me what to do, gladly will I help you. I came because father was not at home. The doctor said you were utterly alone, and my

conscience bade me come to you, if only for a moment. I have medicines with me—there may be something among them that you need. I will read the labels on them, and you can perhaps tell what you need.”

The invalid whispered assent, and producing the vials from her pocket, she proceeded to read the labels. At the conclusion he indicated that nothing she had would avail him. “Oh, what shall I—what *can* I do?” she exclaimed hopelessly, laying the vials on the floor beside her and then turning to him again. He said faintly and almost exhausted: “Old Nora Rudd told me once that in some seasons of cholera brandy has been used successfully, and at other times with very bad effect. The doctor has positively forbidden it. He may be right; but oh, I want to live, and something tells me brandy freely taken will save me.”

When he had managed to deliver himself of this opinion, his flickering strength gave way and he closed his eyes. He could not answer her further inquiries. She feared to experiment with the brandy. The impression had gone abroad that it was deleterious. But finding him too exhausted to speak further, she knelt silently beside him, pondering the matter. Had she not heard that sometimes the instinct of a patient is his salvation, in despite of the physician’s advice? The poor sufferer was so nearly gone it could hardly make any difference. She had better make the experiment; she had better go in quest of the brandy; she would go. She spoke to Rutherford again. He slowly unclosed his eyes upon her. That effort was his last. It seemed to occasion him pain. Then he appeared to be sleeping. She could hear him breathing. She arose, resumed her cloak, drew her veil over her face, and went softly out into the night. The stars had come out and were shining clearly enough for her to find her way. It was a long distance to any apothecary’s shop, but she feared to procure the desired stimulant at any public-house where she might meet with rudeness. So she resolutely held on her

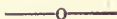
way, sustained by the reflection that she might be the means of saving that dear life. "Grant it, kind Heaven," she said to herself; "and then let me die." But the delicate girl had already taxed her strength too far in the oppressive heat, and by the time she reached the shop she was ready to fall with fatigue. When she had seated herself breathless at the apothecary's, she found it necessary to wait a long time. The place was full of persons providing themselves with drugs, to be in readiness for the dreaded symptoms of the pestilence. Finally her turn to be waited on arrived, and impatiently she called for a bottle of brandy. The clerk, who recognised her, said: "I suppose you want it for a cholera patient, Miss Heron?" She nodded assent.

"The practice of treating the cholera without brandy seems to have changed suddenly. The doctor was just in here, and he said several patients who had used it freely, were much better, and he was determined to recommend it as an experiment. Anything else, Miss?"

"No, I thank you," said she, eagerly grasping the bottle and hurrying out of the shop. A thrill of joy flashed through her at his intelligence. Rutherford's instinct was correct, then. He might be saved if she should reach him in time. Strengthened by this gleam of hope, she darted down the street, regardless of all passers. It never occurred to her that this excitement and fatigue she was passing through, might predispose her own system to an attack of the cholera. His safety—his one precious life—was all she cared for as she flew on. This is almost exclusively the prerogative of woman; this utter abandonment of self to save the loved one. The almost inevitable censure of society which would ensue, when it was known that she had sought him alone; the danger to herself, of being unattended at night; the grim monster cholera stalking up and down the doomed village in search of fresh victims—were utterly forgotten in the zeal and devotion of her love and charity. Such impulsive natures as Marie commit many errors of judgment, but

oh ! will not the kind Father above look on the heart ! Thrilled, hopeful, anxious, she passed on her star-lighted way. The houses were rapidly growing more and more scattered, the fields came at length gloomily into view, and away off towards the river, she saw that light gleaming again—the beacon-lamp of her love—her young, hopeless, eager love. Soon she reached the little cottage, and, panting and trembling, opened the door. The same silence as before, interrupted only by the distinct tick, tick, tick of the old clock. She walked anxiously to the bedside and took up the lamp again. He was breathing still. She spoke to him. No answer. She placed her little hand on his shoulder and gave him a gentle shake. It did not arouse him. Alarmed, she shook him violently. He opened his eyes and closed them quickly again. The lids seemed to be glued firmly down ; she could not open them again, with all her efforts at shaking him. She touched his lips ; their cold chilled her fingers. She opened her basket at once and drew out the silver spoon ; she filled it with brandy, and forcing open his teeth, poured it gradually into his throat. She continued to administer the stimulant to him in this way until one-quarter, at least, of the bottle was exhausted. She knelt silently then beside him, watching his faint breathing and whispering earnest prayers to God for his recovery. Finally, to her inexpressible delight, he opened his eyes and smiled. Slowly, but surely, the stimulant effected her purpose ; Rutherford whispered to her his thanks. At his suggestion, she gradually gave him more brandy ; it revived him. He exhibited palpable signs of improvement. He talked aloud ; he blessed her for saving his life. Then she gave him bread, soaked in the brandy. In an hour he was so much improved that her heart was hopeful and light. She spoke to him in her low sweet tones, and soothed him ; and under the lulling influence of her music-voice, he at length fell into a profound slumber. She sat, then, on a chair and watched—a long, weary watch of alternate hope and fear. By-and-by, a

hard substance rattled against the door. Tremblingly she arose and answered the knock. To her amazement, it was Nora, the reputed prophetess, come to look after the young lawyer. The intelligence of his illness had reached "The Glen." The old nurse appeared to be omnipresent where suffering and trouble and sickness were.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE clock chimed midnight. The two watchers silently counted the strokes as they gazed upon the face of the sleeper. As that musical vibration died away upon the hushed air, Nora observed the lamplight flicker. A slight puff of air had entered the open window. There was to be a change from the dead oppressiveness of the sultry night. As she called the attention of the young girl to the agreeable fact, a stronger current of air from without caused the flame to bend still lower from the lamp. Happy would it be if a storm was approaching, to clear the air and check the destructive power of the pestilence. So many days had witnessed that same dead glare of the sun—that same suffocating stillness of the atmosphere. The old nurse bent over the sleeper, and tenderly studied every lineament of his pale face. The examination appeared to be satisfactory to her, for she came again to the table, and sat down beside Marie, and said, in a low tone:

"He has changed for the better. I think now he will recover. If he does, depend upon it, you, and you alone, have saved him. God sent you here, no doubt. But I am going to take you home before day dawns. You have compromised your character in the eye of the world; it is a hard, unfeeling world. But we must take things as we find them, and try to reconcile our conduct with many prejudices of that world. I hope to see you safe at home before day-

light, and then, if you can teach your maid discretion, no one will be any the wiser for this disinterested act of yours. I, for one, shall ever be grateful to you for saving this poor young man. You cannot conceive how much I am interested in him. I do not believe there is another in this town who could have called me away from 'The Glen' at this time. Mrs. Baltimore is expected every day, now. The place is in perfect readiness for her coming, and I am very busy in training the servants to give her a suitable reception. But I had nearly forgotten this," she exclaimed, thrusting her hand into her pocket. "It was handed me on my way here to-night, and my anxiety about Rutherford made me forget it altogether."

She produced a letter postmarked at New York, and addressed to herself in an unknown hand. She tore it open, and was soon engrossed with its contents. Marie, excited as she was by the skilful nurse's endorsement of her instrumentality in the probable salvation of Rutherford's life, took little notice of old Nora while she was reading, but passed around to the opposite side of the couch, and, kneeling down, returned God thanks for sending her to that place. Then she arose and stood in contemplation of that pale countenance she loved so well until Nora exclaimed :

"Come here, Miss Heron ; I want you to hear this letter. They have all arrived in New York, and Mrs. Baltimore is sick. A companion of the young widow, named Miss Angier, has written the letter for her."

As Marie came around to the table again, a sudden gust of wind nearly extinguished the lamp.

"Shut the window, if you please, Miss Heron. I trust God is going to send us a storm."

The window was closed, and the white-robed girl sat down beside the raven-haired woman of sixty. Nora, with low but distinct articulation, read as follows :

"Well, here we are. Mrs. Grace Baltimore, Sir Francis

Cleveland, and his daughter; Miss Angier—that's my humble self—and Mirage, that's the white horse his very proud self, and the Newfoundland dog, named Bounce, for the satisfactory reason that he never does bounce, but stalks along like a saintly Elder. We're all soaked and bruised, and pounded by Neptune, and are the most forlorn party of adventurers that ever went down in ships to do business upon the great waters. Is that Scripture, or is it not? for it occurs to me that my wits and my memory are at present thumped by the sea into that condition commonly styled 'unsatisfactory.' We've walked the waters like a thing of life, and, as a necessary consequence, we several times went under, and wet our soles, which probably never occurred to the poet. But, seriously, we've been shipwrecked. That is, if that wildly romantic term can be applied to being tossed about for weeks in a leaky vessel, without masts or sails or rudder; provisions almost exhausted, and no dessert; sailors so worn out that the party of *pleasure?* on board had to work at the pumps, besides the captain and mate being washed overboard—and other trifling casualties too numerous to mention.

"Your friend, Mrs. Grace Baltimore, is the most magnificent woman I ever laid eyes on. Had she not taken the captain's place, and ordered the second mate to be put in irons, you would never have enjoyed the perplexity of deciphering this scrawl. Everybody was disheartened and exhausted. But she appeared to revel in surmounting all the difficulties of our terrible condition. When the second mate attempted to lower the only remaining boat and escape with the ablest seaman on board, she drove him below with an old pistol, and by her resolute will and her blazing eye, she forced the sailors to put irons on him. Then she assumed command of the sinking ship, and by almost superhuman exertions the leak was stopped. She would not leave the deck for three nights, but remained there, pistol in hand, keeping the men to their work. Oh, the horrors

of those three hopeless nights of howling winds and surging sea! The man at the helm declared that nothing held him to his wheel in his weakness and despair through those awful nights but the terrors and the brilliancy of those black eyes, gazing at the foaming waves ahead, and that sweet clear voice urging him on to hope and home. Mrs. Baltimore saved the vessel; every sailor on board assented to the fact. At last we fell in with a ship, which gave us spars and all we needed, and here we are in New York—sick, utterly worn out, and with a feeling towards the noble ocean equal in intensity only to a step-mother's love.

"Mrs. Baltimore directs me to say that our sojourn in the city may extend to four weeks yet. I send you herewith her directions what to do with the articles of taste and luxury which will be shipped to 'The Glen' in a few days.

"Upon reading a portion of this letter to her, Mrs. Baltimore remarks that I must have forgotten that I am addressing a lady of sixty in this rattle-brain way. I beg pardon, Mrs. Rudd, if I have exceeded the bounds of propriety in writing to a stranger in this style. But really it is my way. I trust upon acquaintance you will not find me utterly devoid of sense.

"Yours very truly,

"KATE ANGIER."

Marie had been quietly studying the old woman's face during the perusal of the letter. Perhaps she sought to find in those features some confirmation of the superstitions so prevalent regarding her. But perfect lady-like repose reigned in that aged countenance. Even the glittering eyes were subdued in expression, as they read tidings of her darling's safety. Once only, when she read of Mrs. Baltimore's fortitude and fearlessness, she raised her piercing eyes to Marie, and said: "That is just like her. She was ever brilliant on great occasions. But usually she is reticent, gentle, and lovely." It would be impossible to express

the fascination of that one intense excited glance of the reader's eyes. It thrilled Marie. It expressed another truth clear as the sunlight. "*I, too, am equal to great occasions.*"

This, then, was the character of the new-comer, concerning whom every one had been talking for months. This was the rich widow, whose influence upon society was expected to produce a sensation. The magnificent nature of the improvements which had been made at "The Glen" had attracted instant attention. The tidings had travelled like wildfire, and on the heels of the real facts pressed closely exaggeration and distortion. According to the last rumors, her wealth was illimitable, her pride imperial. She had certainly written home offering immense rewards for the apprehension of her brother's murderer. This last impression, which Marie held in common with the public, as it now passed again through her mind, naturally suggested the female inquiry :

"Mrs. Baltimore is wearing mourning for her husband and her brother Walter, of course, is she not?"

The question startled Nora, who was thinking of far different topics just at that moment. When the name of Nicholas Traver's son met her ear, she looked quickly at her companion with a painful, anxious glance. The keen eyes of Marie detected terror in that look. At least she imagined that expression denoted a mind ill at ease. Why should that Christian nurse exhibit tokens of fear or anxiety; or whatever the emotion was; she certainly was disconcerted by the abrupt question. It spoke directly to some powerful hidden emotion in her breast. The interrogatory was simple and natural enough. The young widow was coming home with gay company. Society had heard that she was making immediate preparations for entertaining elegantly and sumptuously. Had she put off mourning for her husband? Or would she continue to wear it still for her murdered brother? Nora could have

answered truthfully and instantly that she really did not know what the intention of Mrs. Baltimore was regarding that matter, having received no letter concerning her wearing apparel. Why did she not answer instantly? Why look so startled, annoyed, as if a black wing had brushed across their pleasant discourse? It must have suggested itself to her that the young girl would think it strange, this unaccountable embarrassment of her manner, for she answered hurriedly at length, and avoiding the more searching look which was now turned upon her.

“Of course—she will mourn deeply for her only brother. Regarding Mr. Baltimore, I cannot form an opinion. He was a very old man, totally unfitted for such a child as she was, and the marriage was always spoken of as a mere arrangement on the part of her father to secure her a large fortune. I cannot believe that Grace would wear mourning for him for a longer period than a few weeks, a merely formal matter. It would be totally unlike her, as she was when I saw her last, to appear to mourn when she was really glad.”

As she concluded, her self-possession seemed to return to her, for when she looked steadfastly at her listener again, every trace of annoyance had disappeared. She proceeded then to speak cheerfully of the expected visitors at “The Glen,” and invited Marie to come and inspect the property in its improved condition, before their arrival, and while she remained its sole custodian.

But the curiosity of the clergyman’s daughter was not to be baffled in this way. Something in her question had excited the old nurse uncomfortably. Was it connected with the name of Mr. Baltimore, or that of the murdered young man? Quickly the old rumor of Nora’s acquaintance with the details of the mysterious marriage, returned to her recollection. It might bear some relation to that strange affair, her question about the mourning. But then, too, there was the murder and Nora’s evidence. She recollected that a lawyer had said to her father, that upon a careful revision and study of

the evidence, he had formed a private opinion of his own, that Nora must have been the first person who arrived at the scene of the murder after it was consummated, and that if she had not actually seen the assassin, she must have missed him by a hair's breadth only. Could it be possible that the old woman had a secret consciousness, a mysterious connection with the terrible affair, that startled her, embarrassed her, when the subject was even indirectly alluded to? This question became uppermost in Marië's mind. It returned to her repeatedly during that night watch, as she sat and listened to Nora's conversation; and afterwards she never crossed the old nurse's path without that question arising and exciting her suspicion. She was impressed with the belief that she knew or suspected something which she had not revealed upon the trial of young Waters. As she could not fail to realize the aged woman's exemplary Christianity and charity, and as her intellect appreciated the intelligence and superiority of her character, the longer she conversed with her, the more distressed did she feel that this secret and painful emotion should lurk in Nora's breast, to be aroused by the faintest touch of any passing hand. It occurred to her, also, as she alternately listened to her companion's voice and the rising sounds of the approaching midnight storm, that the helpless sleeper on the bed was possessed of a painful secret, too—the mystery of the figure on the cliff in her own sketch. Would that she might fathom both, and be permitted to render aid and comfort to the being she loved, and to his aged friend.

The windows of the little office shook now in the violent rush of the wind. The stars were shrouded, and impenetrable darkness hovered over the silent village. Slowly and solemnly the storm-clouds had moved to their places at the signal of God. His command had gone forth, and in the scowl of the heavens the death-angel spread his wings and hastened away. The pestilence should scourge the children of men no longer. Hush! the welcome rain is pattering

upon the roof; its tiny, tinkling feet fall on the leaves, and the parched earth drinks eagerly in the darkness. The merciful shower increases in strength, the sounds of its musical dashing reach the ears of the poor sufferers on their beds, and their faithful watchers walk eagerly to the windows to look out. No external object meets their eyes pressed closely to the glass. Darkness reigns, and the torrents of heaven pour wildly, without stint, upon the eager, thirsty ground. *Crash!* A blinding flash illumined every watchful face, and aroused the sleepers. The lightning had fallen somewhere in the village. Something was shattered and ruined. Marie was standing close to the window, and was blinded for an instant by the intense brilliancy of the falling bolt.

"Where did it strike?" she tremblingly asked. "I thought it had fallen upon *us*, for an instant."

The old woman, who was seated by Rutherford at the moment he was awakened by the crash, replied: "It seemed to be at the far end of the town. It must have been on the property of Nicholas Traver. He is visited oftener in that way than any one I know of. It is a bad sign, too, they say, when the warning is unheeded." The last sentence was muttered, but the invalid heard it.

"What *is* the warning?" he inquired feebly. Marie, hearing that voice again, came close to the bed to listen also.

The nurse, in a distinct and reverential tone, said slowly:

"I have heard, as long ago as when I was a girl, and my mother told me that saying herself. She was reputed to be an uncommonly pious woman, and she possessed the gift of telling many things that would happen in the future. Some people said it was mere chance that her impressions of the future came true. Whether that was true or not, can make no difference. She acted always from conviction, and she prayed constantly, earnestly, to her Saviour to guide her into the way of all truth. My mother has said, and I have heard her, that all people who pray a brief ejaculatory prayer to God when they hear a clock strike, have as many additional

guardian angels sent to help them as the number of times the clock strikes. I have heard her say, and she believed it, too, that any one who scoffed at the immortality of the soul when a funeral passed by, at that instant was deserted by one guardian angel. And she told me this, too, and I shall never forget it. It rings in my ears like a voice of the present: 'Whosoever dares refuse to make the restitution which conscience orders when the lightning falls and terrifies, shall not leave one atom of their body on earth to be buried.'"

The listeners were startled by a noiseless sheet of lightning which gave to the solemn face of the prophetess a ghastly hue. The far-off report of thunder came at length in a low rumbling sound, which jarred the little tenement upon its foundations. A sensation of awe thrilled Marie, and she pressed instinctively to Nora's side for protection. Her slight movement was detected, and the prophetess, placing her hand kindly on the fair girl's arm, said humbly:

"I am no protection, sweet girl. We are all in the hollow of a kind Father's hand. Love Him, trust Him alone for safety. One loving word of prayer and faith is a stronger shield from every storm of life than all earth's congregated humanity can ever be. Aye! stronger than all human skill and devices, all sciences, and all arts of men. I have seen life-long schemers, men and women, who understood well every passion of the human heart upon which they played. I have seen them foiled at last, when success seemed just within their grasp, by one simple, fervent prayer of an honest heart. Turn to God in every danger and every trouble, and let the sneers and the satire of men pass unheeded by."

"Nora, will I live?" murmured the faint voice of Rutherford as he looked up at his two watchers.

"As far as God has given me insight into the symptoms of this pestilence, I believe you will. If you continue as you are now, no worse even for two hours more, you will certainly recover. You should have sent for me at once. Nothing that lives would have kept me away from you.

And now you must thank this dear girl for saving your life. Without the stimulant she gave you, you never could have revived."

"Oh! I am grateful—so grateful! Miss Heron, and her father, and you have been assigned to cheer me in my lonely life. It is enough—it is enough. With such friends I can face life. I can wring from shame, from society, the confession that I at least am honorable, am honest, am a true man."

The effort exhausted him, and he ceased. The plaintive tones of the sufferer touched Nora's heart. She bent over him, smoothed tenderly his forehead with her hand, and brushed back his hair. The magnetism of her touch seemed to bring him relief, for soon he fell asleep again. The powerful stimulant was acting favorably upon his exhausted system. "Poor, poor fellow," she murmured. "A stout, honest heart, but such a weary, heavy load of shame to bear. Oh! Miss Heron, it is so hard to possess a proud, sensitive nature, and yet have to endure the scorn and aversion of society; to be personally innocent, pure in purpose and character, and yet to be spurned as if a pestilence came from your very touch. But I tell you," she added, raising her voice, excited by her subject, "he will live to be recognised, to be honored by those who turn their backs upon him now. Look at that forehead; power slumbers there, and will. He will force a path of honor for himself, and that is worth a thousand inherited titles and honors. You and your father, and my own clergyman, who have so generously befriended him, will dwell first and uppermost in his regard, when his regard becomes an honor, as it will be; mark my words. That poor, helpless sleeper will cleave his way through obstacles like a young giant. The finger of shame will almost break his heart; but you, society, the world, will never see its lonely hidden agony. He will come forth from his trials and his midnight sorrows into the light of day with a calm, resolute face, and the world will never know how

desperately he has wrestled alone with despair. And he will triumph at last—mark my words. `They are the prediction of one who has studied men and character for more than twice your lifetime.’”

She spoke earnestly, tremulously, as if her whole soul was bound up in that sleeper. Every impressive word went to the young girl’s heart. Alas! that heart had believed and predicted all this in its own secret communings. But she loved him now with all the intensity of her nature, for what he was, noble and suffering, not for what he would be. It was while he was trampled down and his heart was bleeding that she yearned to soothe him, to comfort him, to tell him of a heart that cherished him every waking hour, and followed his image through the golden gate of dreams. Therefore she answered the old nurse guardedly, lest her secret should be revealed, and endeavored to ascribe her maiden visit, her impulsive act of love, to purely charitable motives. Did she delude herself with the thought that those experienced eyes could not read the language of her open face? Then did she grievously err, for Nora was one of those strange minds that are suddenly and correctly impressed by those who cross their path. She knew that the clergyman’s daughter loved, and therefore did she hasten, as soon as the patient’s condition appeared to authorize it, to induce her to resume her disguise and return to her home. She wished to save her from the keen slander of the world. She admired her self-sacrifice in coming to save Rutherford. Now it was necessary to save her.

When the rain finally ceased and the dawn was near, the two stole quietly out into the dark street and left the sleeper alone.



CHAPTER XIV.

THE moon rose slowly and clear upon the hushed town. The motionless leaves of the trees at length were bathed in the silver radiance as the serene watcher of the night sailed upward to its post. The increasing light poured into the faces of those who lingered at the parlor windows, or were clustered in groups upon the balconies. The shops were closed. The hum of business had died away, and the weary were sleeping. The promise, however, of a brilliant night detained many lovers of the beautiful away from their beds. The balmy summer air, the fragrance of flowers breathing forth upon the night, and the gentle beauty of the full moon, were more alluring than the silence and retirement of the softest couch. Hence they lingered, enjoying the scene, and listening to the occasional sounds of melody which distantly and faintly trembled upon the air. The distant thrumming of a guitar was heard at intervals, and then the sweeter and prolonged sound of a flute fluttered gently under the drooping branches. Then a sound of the busy world boomed away over the waters. A heavy steamboat-bell was ringing the tidings of its night approach. The belated river-boat was nearing the dock to land passengers. That sound died away, and all was hushed again save the trembling notes of the flute. Hark! the first heavy stroke of the town-clock in the church-tower begins to count the hour of night. No! it is too fast, too violent, that sound of the church-bell. Hush! beating hearts! What means that far-off cry of distress, struggling up against the air? Another and louder cry burst clear and distinct upon the night, "Fire! Fire! Fire!" Oh, merciful God! The town is parched with the long drought, and the streams which supply the hydrants are dry. The river is too far off for help. Fly, brave hearts and willing arms, to the dreadful spot, for the fierce grapple with sweeping fire! The whole town is in imminent peril.

Away over the houses and the streets comes the din of

shouting voices, the rattle of the fire-engines, and the blended booming of the alarm-bells. None but the sick linger in bed for the dreadful cry reaches all hearts. The drought has made every house a tinder-box for destruction in the jaws of fire. Away! away! struggle and battle with the raging element before it is too late.

"At the first notes of the discordant din," Rutherford sprang to his feet. Weeks ago he had recovered from the cholera. He had just now retired to bed, weary and overworked by his devotion to his literary manuscripts. The alarm-bells waked him, and hurrying on his clothes, he dashed out into the street, with the eagerness of a generous soul, to aid the suffering. The glare upon the sky was his beacon, and he ran on. The fire had evidently broken out in the most densely populated portion of the town, and at the street most remote from water. Few had yet hurried out upon the streets, and he passed an engine-house where a handful of firemen were struggling hard to drag their machine out upon the pavement. When they called to him he turned back, and placing his powerful shoulder to the wheel, aided them to roll the engine out. Two other passers came to their assistance, and, grasping the ropes, they all started off for the fire with shouts and yells. On their way they were joined by others of the fire company, and presently they turned into the main street, and the terrible conflagration burst upon their view. They were the first company upon the ground, and their task was formidable indeed. The flames had travelled rapidly upon the frame buildings, dry and blistered by the drought, and already four hundred feet of houses were one mass of fierce relentless fire, leaping, tossing onward, and spreading over the street a furnace-heat that was intolerable by human life for one minute. Resolutely they planted the engine beyond the fire, where they could play upon the houses as yet untouched by the destroyer, and drench them sufficiently to stay its march. They labored faithfully for a few minutes at the

brakes, but the cistern which supplied the water speedily was exhausted, and the mad flames passed over the spot of their useless labor. Alas! the blazing cinders were lifted by the wind and scattered thousands of feet on every side, and fresh fires burst out in every direction. The town seemed doomed to utter destruction. Wildly arose the yells of other brave and hurrying companies, and as they dashed in upon the scene they wheeled their engines into favorable spots to fight the fire, and madly fell upon their brakes to hurl the insufficient supplies of water upon the flames. The crackling and roaring of the fire, the crash of falling timbers, the yells of the despairing as they clung to the upper windows of dwellings which were wreathed below in smoke and blaze bursting outward, the screams of mothers and children parted in terror—all, all served only to nerve the noble firemen to renewed exertions. They planted ladders, and, ascending through smoke and fire, returned with burdens of human life—infants, the sick, the helpless—and called to each other encouragingly, and yelled their joy at every new rescue. But the flames rushed on, blazing, crackling, roaring, spreading wildly, mounting upward, sweeping over the doomed town, pouring destruction in torrents of quivering heat and blinding smoke upon new victims, and blanching the thousands of faces which fell backward at the approaching demon of fire.

At last, finding that water could not be had to check the conflagration, the almost exhausted firemen, and the citizens who dashed recklessly in to their assistance, fell upon the untouched buildings near with axe and sledge, and wrenching the boards and windows and doors away, secured grappling-places for the iron hooks, attached to poles and ropes, with which the united strength of hundreds of arms hurled the ponderous frames and timbers of the houses to the ground. Vain, useless struggles of human skill and will and endurance to avert the rushing flames! The blazing monster leaped these openings and fiercely roared on his relentless way.

Near the centre of the great circle which the conflagration described among the houses and trees of the ill-fated town, Marie Heron broke through the volumes of smoke and flame which enveloped her father's dwelling, and emerged safely into the street. She was nearly suffocated by the smoke which had awakened her, and she stood for a moment dizzy and bewildered on the pavement in her night dress. Then, as recollection returned, she screamed piteously: "My father, my poor sick father, is lost; for God's sake, save him!" Her cry was unheeded. Everybody near was intent upon his own salvation or that of his family, or busy in the less commendable effort of saving his personal property. The dwelling of the clergyman was nearly concealed in the volumes of smoke. No one was likely to hazard personal safety in that doomed mansion. She raised her hands to God: "Save my father—my dear father." The tread of four hideous figures was close behind her. Begrined with smoke and cinders beyond all possibility of recognition, with hair burnt off in tufts, and wrapped in blankets belted around their waists to protect them from the fire, four men were passing and heard her cry. They looked like monsters; but they wore under those half-burnt blankets the souls of heroes. Like brothers those four men had stood by each other through the horrors of that street. The few who had followed their leading cry at first had gradually fallen away from their support, intimidated and half-suffocated by the smoke. They had shouted then, when they discovered that they were forsaken by all through fear: "We four will stand by each other till the last gasp." They dashed through flame and smoke—mounted tottering staircases—burst open doors already on fire, and seizing the helpless and the sleeping, bore them out to places of safety. Burning stairs had fallen under their weight, timbers had careened and fallen near them, hurling showers of sparks and ashes over them—but they had escaped serious injury thus far. Mothers had received their children from their brawny arms, and blessed

them with tears and cries of joy ; invalids were borne safely from flame-wreathed buildings and placed carefully on the grass in safety ; and then the four had hastened on to new scenes of danger and triumph. A crowd of men and women were following them at a safe distance, and cheering them with exultant yells of joy and approbation at every new feat of daring. They defied the horrors of a fire-death, and they were saved. They disappeared sometimes so long in the blazing and dusky shroud, that they were believed certainly to have fallen victims. But no ! they emerged at last, and generally with a struggling or half-suffocated burden of human life.

These hideous and unknown heroes had arrived in time to hear the piteous cry of the clergyman's daughter. One of them asked, in a voice that made her start : " Which is the room—tell us quick ? " She indicated the apartment where her sick father lay. With a yell, the four dusky figures darted up the steps in rivalry and entered the house. They were instantly hidden in blinding volumes of smoke.

Marie fled away from the spot, as, with a heavy crash, one of the floors fell, and millions of sparks burst out upon the street. Beyond the reach of the intolerable heat, she paused and gazed with agony upon the half-hidden house. Alas ! that funeral pile held all she valued upon earth, her father and her heart's idol, Rutherford. Yes ! that voice had been recognised. He was one of the heroic four. Poor, lonely girl ! Thy young life is darkened. Thine idols are there shrivelling to death in agony. Why did God create thee with capabilities of intense affection, only to blast them in fire ! She fell fainting to the earth, with the crowd gathering about her. A kind woman flung a shawl over her night-dress, and then knelt beside her, calling for water to restore her. When the grateful fluid at last arrived and was poured upon her head, she revived, and asked :

" What is that shout ? "

Again and again the wild music of joy pealed forth in

cheers of that delighted crowd. And a voice explained to her that her father had been rescued, dragged out of a back window of his house, and was now being carried to her side. But alas! *one* of the four heroes had been crushed by falling timber, and left in the fire to perish. The suddenly lighted lamp of hope was dashed to the earth, and with a quick flutter at the heart, she fell back again insensible in the woman's arms.

But the mad element, mocking at sorrow and ruin, swept fearfully on. The whole street where the clergyman and his daughter were lying was illuminated by a glare as of daylight. Every face of the thronging multitude was revealed, and thousands of anxious faces were watching as one man the reckless heroism of the three remaining rescuers, who still entered the falling tenements and courted death. The fire in its onward fury had now reached a point near the court-house and the jail. Fortunately these buildings stood detached from the houses of the street. A pool of foul water was close at hand, and by strenuous exertions it might be conducted into one of the engines, and the fire be stayed at this open space. But the leathern hose had been burnt off, and no means remained of supplying the engine save by the use of buckets and pails passed from hand to hand. A few of the more energetic citizens realized the vital importance of checking the progress of the flames at this point, and rallied at once to the assistance of the exhausted firemen; some of whom had worked so long at the brakes, as the engines moved from station to station, that they had fallen at full length upon the ground, utterly unable to move an arm. A short line of bucket-passers was formed, but wholly inadequate to reach to the pool of water. Two or three men ran along the front of the crowded spectators who lined one side of the street, and by urgent appeals sought to obtain volunteers to take the places of the worn-out firemen. Some generous men and boys of different grades in society broke from the crowd and responded to the call. But they were a

handful. In vain did the summoners plead for more volunteers. The bulk of the spectators, deeming that they possessed no particular personal interest in the matter of suppressing the fire, so far away from their own dwellings, doggedly maintained their attitude and looked on. In vain were they assured that the town could be saved only at this critical point. They held their idle hands in their pockets, and made no move. But the indomitable summoners held persistently on, occasionally shaming a volunteer to their assistance. It appeared at length that the force of volunteers requisite could not be secured, and the town must be burned utterly.

At this juncture an interruption occurred which turned many eyes from the fire spectacle. Away down the burning street a commotion was perceptible. The confusion seemed to increase, and the distant murmurs of an excited crowd were audible. Presently the object of interest came into view, flying like the wind along the brilliant line of burning buildings. A snow-white steed, with flowing mane and tail, was tearing along, frightened by the glare of the flames and the crackling of the burning wood. Madly he dashed along up the street, shying at fallen timbers, and then plunging ahead at a pace which threatened to unseat the lady who rode him. Erect, and apparently as firm as a rock, was seated the rider, with steady hand and roving eye guiding the flight she could not control. A long black feather waved back from her riding-cap, and her dark habit contrasted strangely with the snow-white color of her steed in the full blaze of the fire wall. Just as she reached the court-house she succeeded in gaining command again of her horse. With a sudden jerk she wheeled him around, facing the blazing buildings. He flung his forefeet once high in air; then, at the smart application of her whip, he dropped his hoofs to earth, and stood panting and trembling and gazing with dilated eye upon the flames. Having conquered him she turned a backward look for her attendants. They were

slowly and cautiously coming along the wall of fire, a cavalcade of four, well mounted—two young ladies and two men—one evidently a groom from his dress. When the groom had gradually accustomed his horse to the strange sounds and glare of the fire, he pushed rapidly ahead after his mistress, leaving the elderly gentleman to look after the young ladies.

By the time the servant had overtaken his mistress, she appeared to have fully taken in a realization of the exigencies of the position. She had listened to the appeals for volunteers, and, glancing along the line of the crowd, saw how few responses were given. Her beautiful lip curled with contempt. She wheeled her horse towards her approaching companions and urged him down the street. Arriving at a point where the spectators were principally men, she reined in her steed and proceeded to appeal to them herself. Clear and emphatic as a silver trumpet rang her voice in the confusion.

“I have just returned to my native town, after an absence of six years in Europe. I have been in the habit of boasting to them there what a brave and generous people my countrymen were. Yonder comes an English gentleman, my guest, who will return to England and tell everything just as he sees it to-night. He will say that Americans as a class are the greatest cowards that ever walked; that he saw a town burning up, women and children running half-naked into the streets, and that the fire could be stopped; but that the men—great, brawny, healthy men—were such selfish, low-spirited, cowardly dogs, that they would not lend a helping hand for one half-hour to save property and families, and one of the most beautiful towns on the continent. Shame, burning shame upon you! If there is one manly, brave American soul among you, step out here, and I will lead you where you can show to that Englishman that you have a soul above the brutes, who cower only when the fire comes. Come on, there, you broad-shouldered man with the red face; clear the way for him, for he looks honest and brave. Here, you

young man, fling off that broadcloth coat, and take hold. It will give you ten pounds more of good sound flesh and health. That's right, come on, all of you; don't let a woman tell you what is manly. We'll save this town yet. Ten brave men, with generous hearts, out of this hundred—that's doing pretty well. We'll find more just above here. Hurry up. There comes the Englishman!"

Many stepped out of the crowd and followed her. Her voice was magical—the influence was contagious. Her followers commenced to shout, running beside her horse, cheering her and calling their acquaintances out from the crowd. Hundreds at length gathered to her train, moving down upon the imperilled court-house, where the flames were already thrusting out their forked tongues, and the cinders were whirling in fiery clouds. The English gentleman, discovering the state of affairs, conducted the young ladies to a place of safety; and after hiring men to hold their horses, he dismounted in sight of the people, and, throwing aside his grey riding coat, took a bucket himself and stood in the line. This act elicited fresh cheers; and volunteers, overpowered with shame, rushed to the brakes and the bucket-line with avidity. There was no time to lose; the atmosphere above the court-house was blazing with flying fragments of shingles, and the bucket-line and the engine were soon enveloped in a whirling cloud of sparks and smoke. Conspicuous above all towered the white horse and his black-plumed rider. He started violently when the sparks fell upon his back or whirled across his eyes; but he was held by an experienced hand, and a voice that he loved soothed him to obey. It was enough to watch her, to stir up the emulous passions of the soul. She wheeled her horse up and down the line of buckets, encouraging, laughing, and pointing out places for new volunteers. At one time it seemed that no human endurance could continue the line. The heat glowed like a furnace; and the rider, as she pranced up and down, was obliged to tie her handkerchief over her face, tearing out with her teeth

places for her eyes. No one would leave while *she* remained; and finally, the building which threatened the court-house fell with a thunder-crash, and all were forced to flee from the awful heat. Gradually, however, the flames subsided amid the ruins, and the intense heat died away. Slowly the crowd approached the spot, and it was soon evident that, unless a sudden wind should arise, a large part of the town would be saved. The court-house stood unscathed, and behind it stood the white horse and rider, listening to the shouts which proclaimed Mrs. Baltimore the savior of her native town. "God bless your sweet eyes," exclaimed a poor woman near her, holding up her baby to see the beautiful lady. "You've saved the court-house, and that saved me and me five children, and me little house, and all the fine houses beyond. The town should put up a monument to ye, and put on it a likeness of your sweet face, and call ye the angel of the suffering, and the honor of your native town. Bad-luck to the fine ladies that have no karackter, ony way, when trouble comes upon the people. The Lord will reward ye, shure."

These words called forth thunders of applause from the listeners.

"Three cheers for John Bull," called out a voice, as the Englishman, blackened with cinders, resumed his coat, and asked for his horse. They were given with a will.

Another voice inquired what had become of the three rescuers. No one appeared to know. They were last seen entering a burning building far down the street, just before the desperate and successful effort to save the court-house.

"I know," exclaimed a boy near; "I heard 'em say they was tired and was going to bed; and I saw 'em go away, too. There was four on the start, but one was burnt up. The other three is all right and safe."

"Thank God for that," said another voice, fervently; "they say those four men saved over thirty lives--men, women, and children. That'll do for one night, sartain."

"Who were they?" inquired Mrs. Baltimore, leaning forward, and endeavoring to locate the voice of the last speaker.

"Nobody knows, ma'am," was the response. "They was disguised by soot and cinders, and sich like. But they looked like young, active men. They didn't seem to know much what fear was. They kinder rollicked in the fire."

"Three cheers for 'em, any way," shouted a fireman, completely drenched with water. "They was good men and true; they dragged me out, when a stick knocked me end-ways. Three cheers. Hooray!"

Cheer after cheer rolled away over the throng for the three heroes who had hazarded life so often in that terrible conflagration, and then quietly had stolen away to their beds, unheralded and unknown. At this moment the Englishman made his appearance with the remainder of the cavalcade who had remained apart, awed and silent spectators of the rescue of the court-house. As they rode up, Mrs. Baltimore said to one of them, laughingly, as she turned her horse to meet them:

"Pardon me, Kate, for leaving you all so unceremoniously at the end of the street; 'Mirage' was on the rampage. He was disposed to review the fire, solitary and alone, and I couldn't hold him. He stopped, like a sensible beast, just where he was needed. I have had all the experience of the torrid zone that is necessary; just look at my face. Come," she added, quickly, "we have a long ride before us, and Nora will be anxious about us. It is some fifteen miles to 'The Glen.' Away we go."

The cavalcade dashed off up the river, and was soon beyond the glare of the fire. Shouts followed that black plume and white steed as long as they were in sight. But the party were soon beyond the village limits, and bounding along under the trees which lined the highway leading past Nicholas Traver's estate. The moon, in full brilliancy, lighted their way, and they rapidly neared the home of Grace Traver's infancy and childhood dreams.

CHAPTER XV.

A TALL figure moved suddenly out of the shrubbery of the garden of "The Glen," and stood in the open moonlight. She said, emphatically, "Stop, Nicholas Traver." The person addressed was startled by the abrupt summons. He paused. She was directly in his path. He made a gesture of impatience, and attempted to pass by, saying:

"I am hurried at present, Mrs. Rudd; any other time, I will listen to you with pleasure; but now——"

The sentence was broken by her quick movement to detain him. She moved instantly in front of him and said, in a determined tone:

"Now or never, you shall listen to me. Whose handkerchief have you in your hand?"

"How can that concern you?" was the pert reply, given with a scowl of indignation. Then he added: "What do you mean by addressing me in that tone, on my daughter's premises?"

"I mean to do my duty," was the calm reply. "Yes, my *duty*." The dark eyes regarded him as if they read the secret purposes of his heart.

"And pray tell me," he said sneeringly, "does your duty authorize you to impede the walks of 'The Glen' at night?"

"It does," she said, firmly, "when those walks are used for purposes which would offend the owner of this property."

"What do you mean, madam? Do you realize that you are addressing the father of Mrs. Baltimore?"

"I do," said the imperturbable voice.

"I will not be dogged by you, Mrs. Rudd, in this style. Who made you a censor over my movements? This is the third time you have presumed to face me in this garden."

"Aye, Nicholas Traver, and it will not be the last. Your conscience alone makes me censor; and your conscience will make every upright woman a censor over your actions.

Your sense of propriety is correct enough. What are you doing with that lady's handkerchief?"

"Returning it to the owner. She dropped it, and requested me to hunt it for her." The answer came out with an effort at coolness.

"Nicholas Traver, the hour is late. You have just conducted that lady to her apartment at an hour when the mistress of this mansion and her guests are sleeping. Your interview has been clandestine. You induced that young lady to meet you here, unknown to Mrs. Baltimore. You dare not permit the inmates of this house to know of such a secret meeting, for you appreciate the responsibility such a knowledge would entail upon you."

Old Nora's eyes glowed upon his sense of sight like stars. They both stood in the full light of the moon, and the moon was directly in her face. He made no reply for a moment, but stood twirling the white handkerchief in silence. She had stated the plain fact, and there was no evading it. His handsome face wore a sullen, lowering look. Then he ejaculated at last: "Well! what of it? What do you propose to do in the premises?"

"Warn the young lady of your real character, if you do not desist," was the firm response.

"And do you imagine, old woman, that she would listen to *you*? Do you flatter yourself that my position and my daughter's support would not be more than a match for any of your assertions? You are dealing with family names and family pride that allow no stain to rest on one of us, while power and influence and wealth retain their potency. A truce to this nonsense. Let me pass. Your proper place is in bed at this hour. Old age has no sympathies with moonlight. Let me pass."

He made an effort again to go on towards the house. A single sentence, resolutely pronounced, checked his footsteps.

"Nicholas Traver, if you leave I will inform your daughter

to-morrow why she was married to an old man. I will tell her, too, in a way that will convince her."

"What do you mean?" he asked, aghast.

"I have access to the agreement. She shall read it from beginning to end."

"That is impossible! You are holding over me an empty threat. Let me pass!" He turned out of the gravelled walk, and made his way across a flower bed. She pronounced words which caused him to turn instantly back again.

"I *have* the agreement. It is signed by you, and two green ribbons are pressed into the wax. Ah! I knew you were fettered by two ribbons."

He returned to her side with evident signs of apprehension in that Adonis face. "Are you a sorceress?" As he spoke he glanced about the garden. He had lost his bold front and loud tone of voice. Then he looked searchingly into her face.

"The guilty and the conscience-stricken call me sorceress. Those who honor the adorable name of God, as you do not, call me Christian—a follower of Jesus, who struggles hard to fulfil duty."

"Well, well," he answered impatiently, "I have no wish to discuss your creeds; nor did I speak literally. I meant, are you gifted with unusually clear perceptions, to probe my secret affairs? How could you gain possession of such a document?"

"Never mind," she replied, composedly; "I have it; and I shall employ it against you, most assuredly, unless you desist from your secret attentions to that young lady. The dignity and decorum of this household demand that your conduct, while a guest here, shall be open and straightforward. You have a gentleman's delicate sense of propriety. Let that rule your actions."

She spoke calmly and with the dignity of an empress. Her uncovered hair glistened in the moonlight, and her eyes looked directly in his. That gaze he felt. He knew no

evasion, no subterfuge could save him from that exposure of his secret life, the key of which was held by that strange being. There was but one course of action open to him; that was, to seem to acquiesce until opportunity should have freed him from this provoking surveillance. The thought flashed to his mind that his influence with his daughter might secure old Nora's removal from her position at "The Glen." His quick judgment as rapidly discarded such a plan. That would only precipitate the old woman's production of the document. How, in the name of ill-luck, had she obtained possession of that paper? A person in her dependent position, who had been known for years to live upon the pittance given for nursing the sick and infants, must have some vulnerable point of self-interest. He would probe for it. He looked at her a moment in silence. Then he spoke.

"Mrs. Rudd, I believe you are right. I *have* acted imprudently. My judgment assents to your rebuke. If you consent to forget and conceal this imprudence, I shall avoid it altogether. Indeed I will."

"That is spoken frankly and like a man," she replied; somewhat mollified by his manner. "As a pledge that you are sincere, give me that handkerchief. I will return it to the owner at a proper time." She extended her hand for it.

"But what shall I say to the owner, who is waiting for it in the hall yonder?"

"Go that way to your own room at once. I will account satisfactorily to the owner why you do not return with it. Go." She pointed towards his private apartments.

"Very well!" he half muttered, "perhaps that *is* best." He felt humiliated to be ordered about in this style, but his purpose would be secured better by not resisting her now. He turned away with a respectful "Good-night, madam."

"Good-night, sir," said she, with coldness.

He turned back after a few paces, as if the idea had suddenly struck him, and called after her. She had not moved

from the place of their conversation, but remained there like a statue of suspicion looking after him.

"Mrs. Rudd, that paper you mentioned is of importance to me—vast importance. It can be of no positive value to you. I will give you for the possession of it any amount of compensation you will name, exorbitant though it be." He approached her while speaking.

Her reply startled him by its energy and bitterness. "You are addressing a lady, sir, above bribery and corruption. That paper shows upon its face that it does not belong to you. You signed it and gave it to another. Do not you dare to approach *me* again with offers of pay."

Stung to the quick, he exclaimed :

"Do what you please with your ill-gotten document. I despise you for your insolence. You are nothing but a servant, any way. I defy your threats, and I promise you full vengeance for whatever injury you do my reputation. Mark that."

He strode furiously down the garden without waiting for her reply. But she noticed, nevertheless, that he went in the direction of his own private apartments. When the sound of his footsteps died away in the distance, she raised the handkerchief which he had relinquished to her, and examined it in the moonlight. The lady's name was marked in the corner. She folded it carefully, and, carrying it in her hand, walked slowly towards the hall or covered way, which connected the old mansion with the new buildings which had been erected in the rear, under her supervision. In these new structures apartments had been assigned to Sir Francis Cleveland and his daughter. Here also was the suite of rooms devoted exclusively to the use of Mrs. Baltimore's father, whenever he chose to honor "The Glen" for a day or two with his presence. These recent structures were calculated for the accommodation of many guests. Each guest had a private parlor, a bed-room elegantly furnished, and a luxurious bathing-closet. The windows looked out upon

the gardens, and on this night several of them were open for the benefit of fresh air, and also that the guests might be lulled to sleep by the fountains musically playing in the moonlight.

Nora opened the door which furnished egress into the grounds from this covered connecting-hall, and directly she heard the rustling of a dress approaching from the old mansion. The moonlight flooded into the covered way at the window openings, and presently a white-robed girl came into view. She wore a dress with low neck and short sleeves. Her fair round arms showed distinctly in the moonlight as she paused near a window to listen. Even the glistening of her finger-rings was revealed. She had evidently heard the door open, and came cautiously along from the old house to receive her lost handkerchief. What was her amazement to hear the voice of Nora call to her from the shadow of the hall:

“Miss Angier, here is a handkerchief with your name on it. You dropped it in the garden some time when you have been walking. The night is perfectly beautiful. I have been enjoying a walk through the grounds. It appears from your dress that you, too, have been sitting up late to enjoy the moon. Is there a fine view from your windows?”

She advanced calmly to the startled young lady and extended the lost article to her, as if nothing unusual had occurred. The poor girl was evidently in a flutter of dismay. What if Nora had chanced to see the clandestine interview! What a narrow escape she must have made! She thanked the old woman as she received the handkerchief, and looked closely into her face to detect any indication of consciousness of the night interview. Nothing was revealed in that self-possessed countenance, and Miss Angier was satisfied that she had escaped detection. She made some trivial explanation of her being in the hall at that late hour, but the old woman interrupted her.

“You need never have any apprehension about moving around this house at night. I am always up late. Indeed,

Bounce and I have constituted ourselves a kind of night-watch. We perambulate this place from one end to the other, and we are almost certain to detect any stranger or strange occurrence on the property. Good-night. I must fasten this door now."

With this comforting assurance of her vigilance, she turned away, and Miss Angier walked thoughtfully into the old house. Could it be possible that her secret promenade had escaped those dark eyes for two or three nights past? It must be discontinued, that was certain. In the present unsatisfactory condition of affairs between herself and Mr. Traver, it was eminently injudicious to allow any one to see her out with him late at night. It was improper to be out at that late hour with him, even if he had proposed and been formally accepted. Her own good sense informed her of this fact as soon as she had received this fright from Nora. But she had been so fascinated by his elegance and address, that discretion had for a time spread its wings and vanished. It now returned solemnly, and stood sentry over her reflections as she disrobed and prepared for bed. Before she fell asleep she said to herself:

"No doubt he is a superb gentleman, and I couldn't do better. But he may escape me after all, and then it will never do for me to be talked about as indiscreet. He must have seen Mrs. Rudd and retired out of her way. If not, he surely would have returned to tell me he could not find the handkerchief."

The old nurse, after locking the door which had given her admittance from the garden, remained in the hall motionless. She listened to the young lady's retiring footsteps as she passed on into the front house. After a while, feeling satisfied that she had retired for the night, she unlocked the door and looked out into the garden. Every object appeared distinct as in daylight. Not a sound was heard but the tinkling of the falling drops in the fountains. Doubt held her motionless for a few moments longer. Then, as no noise

of human life was apparent, she gained confidence and passed out into the garden, locking the door behind her and putting the key in her pocket. She walked slowly along the path which led her past the windows of Nicholas Traver. They were open, and she walked upon the grass close to the building, that he might not hear her footfall, should he chance to be still awake. She sat down upon the steps of the Gothic porch which covered the door which had given him access to his room, and listened. All was quiet within except the industrious ticking of a little clock. She returned then along the path, and passing around the front house, found the dog Bounce lying upon the steps of the old ivy-wreathed stone porch, which had been built by the founder of the Baltimore family. The dog recognised her, and, rising, walked with dignity towards her. She patted him on the head, and bade him, in a subdued tone, to follow her. He obeyed, and she conducted him to his kennel, under the long piazza, which had looked for so many years towards the pine-bordered glen which concealed the brook of the park. He was then chained to his kennel.

Nora passed on as softly as she could through the garden shrubbery until she reached its boundary fence. She pushed open a gate noiselessly, and entered the park. The moonbeams quivered at intervals through the summer foliage of the oaks and maples, and lighted her way. After a while she reached the undergrowth which adjoined the premises of Willow Bend. Here she paused and listened for footsteps. She was disappointed, and walked back and forth along the belt of undergrowth to give the expected comer time to fulfil the engagement to meet her. Her watch was at length rewarded by hearing the shrubbery parted, and in a moment more a female made her appearance in the open park. She advanced to meet her. It was Mrs. Granville.

The lady threw back the hood which she had assumed for purposes of concealment, and the moonlight fell upon her alabaster face. She looked anxious, awed, as if her mission

to the park was attended with hazard. She glanced nervously about under the trees, as if she feared interruption. Nora's composed tones of voice reassured her.

"Do not be at all concerned. I have taken all necessary precautions to secure you a secret visit. Everybody is sleeping."

"Perhaps I am over anxious to-night," was the response. "But Zoe has been talking so strangely in her sleep that it has made me nervous. That dear child sees so many ethereal beings in her dreams, and is for ever talking about them. Sometimes she springs suddenly up from her sleep, and putting her arms around my neck, tells me what the angels have been saying to her. Frequently, as to-night, she warns me of danger near, and says: 'Mamma, you must pray again to-night, for they say it is a shield from trouble.' I have just left her asleep, with a white lily clasped in her hands; for she insisted that her guardians from Heaven come closer to her when she sleeps with white flowers near her. Oh! I am so fearful that she is going to leave me alone some day. She is growing so delicate and spiritual. Alas! if she goes, I know not what will become of me. She is the last link that binds me to hope and mercy." The speaker was interrupted by the furious barking of a dog. Some one was surely stirring in the neighborhood of the kennel.

Nora pointed her companion to a cluster of young trees in the park, which would serve as a place of concealment until she could return to the house and discover the cause of the intrusion on the premises. Mrs. Granville drew her hood over her face, and hastened away to the designated spot to await Nora's return.

The old nurse rapidly passed across the park, and, reaching the stone porch of the mansion, groped under it for her steel-pointed staff, that she might be in readiness to defend herself, if necessary. Securing the weapon, she proceeded to the kennel of Bounce. The dog was very uneasy, running back and forth at the length of his chain, and howling occa-

sionally at some unseen person. She silenced him and listened. No sound met her ear. The keen instinct of the dog could not be at fault, and she listened again. Ah! that was the difficulty. The hollow sound of a horse's hoofs leaving the floor of the stables was audible for an instant, and then all was still again. She directed the dog to lie down and keep still. Cautiously stealing down the sloping garden to the pine-bordered glen, she gained a view of the stables, and saw a mounted man just turning out of the moonlight into the shadow of the barns. She could see him moving indistinctly through the shadows, and then he was lost in the intervening shrubbery. Presently she heard the hoofs beat slowly across a bridge over the creek. The rider was finding his way around to the great drive of the park by a path seldom used. That surely indicated unwillingness to be seen from the windows of the mansion. She hastened along under the shrubbery to the stables to alarm the servant who had charge of the horses, and who must have been soundly sleeping. Arriving at the barns, she found the hostler awake. He informed her that Mr. Traver had come quietly for his horse, and telling him to remain in bed, had saddled the beast himself, and rode off on some night business which he evidently desired to keep concealed. There could be, of course, no demurrer to this arrangement, and Nora returned to the front of the mansion on her way to the cluster of trees, where Mrs. Granville was awaiting her return.

That lady had reached the designated place of concealment, and stood listening to the distant howling of the dog. Presently all sound had died away, and leaning her hand upon a tree, she remained silent and attentive. The moonlight shimmered through the leaves of the great oaks and maples, and brought out in daylight distinctness large patches of greensward where it fell. Peering out from her hiding-place, Mrs. Granville saw near at hand the main avenue or drive of the park. There were few trees at that point to shade the avenue, and the road was revealed for several

hundred feet in the full glare of the moon. She pressed back her hood again, and her exquisite beauty was presented in all its mature loveliness. Her large, lustrous eyes were bent upon the avenue, and the moonbeams fell upon a face which was as motionless and purely white as marble. A sound of something approaching met her ear. She drew back again into the shadow of the thicket. Presently she recognised the beat of hoofs coming along the avenue. The rider was evidently too hurried to linger under the trees for enjoyment of the fairy-like scene. The flying steed came nigher to her place of retreat. She leaned forward and parted the branches in curiosity. He rode boldly, and with the ease of a cavalier. He bounded past the thicket, and held on down the avenue towards the porter's lodge, utterly unconscious of the beautiful face which regarded him. He was gone, but not forgotten. That princely form and bearing was one in a thousand. It recalled agonies of memory; aye, bitter, burning tears of shame and remorse, vows broken, affection blighted and trampled into dust, and pride hurled from its throne of power. It recalled a woman's fathomless, undying love; that love which erects an idol, and sacrifices to it everything which is most cherished, most sacred in life.

Poor deserted, exquisite child of beauty and grace, how like a blighted flower she fell to the earth, and moaned, covering her face with her hands, and murmuring through her burning tears prayers to God to forgive her for loving him still; for yearning after him with a soul's devotion; for craving the poor but exquisite privilege of kissing his hand, and moistening it with her tears! It was so long since she had looked upon that glorious shape of manhood—so many weary years since he had smiled on her, and pressed her head lovingly to his breast! Oh, that she might rest her aching head on that dear pillow once again, and hear him whisper his low, sweet tones of love. Lower and lower she crouched in agony, and moaned: "Oh, God! give him back to me, or let me in mercy die."

Fainter and fainter grew the sound of the flying hoofs. Each beat upon the hollow-sounding earth seemed to crush an outstretching tendril of a bleeding heart. He was gone, unconscious of the trembling life crouching in the thicket—the poor forsaken being who clung so faithfully to his memory, and whose abandonment to him had nearly obliterated the name of God. What wonder, that in the inexperience and ardor of sixteen summers, she had loved passionately the most elegant gentleman of his county. His praises were on every lip; his accomplishments were the delight of every social gathering. His tones of tenderness awoke responses in her young soul which could never die. She looked up to him for counsel and sympathy. He was the guardian of her property, appointed by her father's will. This gave him access to her. She trusted him, as a being of superior intellect, a paragon of manly beauty and excellence. And when he ventured, in his mature age and his unequalled power of fascination, to whisper to her of love, everything seemed to swim dizzily around her. Who would not be happy to receive the addresses of such a widower? She abandoned herself to his love and honor. Alas! her guardian-angel looked up mournfully to God, and moaned: "She is betrayed—so young, so helpless. Oh! forgive her!"

The last sound of the hoofs had passed away, and she arose again, calm and marble-white in the moonlight. All traces of tears had vanished. No doubt some celestial comforter had fluttered downwards to her side, for she had been praying.

The world turns sneeringly away from the fallen; but then a face of exquisite sweetness draws near, and a loving voice whispers: "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

As she stood there, silent and thoughtful, Nora came to her and said: "Now we can go on; Mr. Traver has taken it into his head to ride out in the moonlight. Did you hear him pass?"

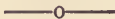
"Oh, yes," was the sad reply; "and I thought I should die. Oh! Nora, no language can express how I love that man yet."

"It's no fault of yours that you do," was the earnest response. "He won your girlish heart by a promise of marriage. Divine Justice will smite him and pardon you."

"No, no; don't say that, Nora. I pray that he may be forgiven. I would rather suffer in this life, if it can avert God's anger from him and from Zoe."

The old nurse was on the point of expressing herself bitterly, but checking her anger, she remained silent, and commenced to walk away. Without another word they traversed the park and arrived at the low pines which bordered the stream. Descending the shelving rock, they reached the bed of the brook, which was now nearly dry. Walking carefully along this hidden way, by stepping on the dry stones which were scattered through the glen, they reached a point at the foot of the garden which extended along the south side of the mansion. Here, by means of natural steps in the rock, they ascended to the wall of an addition which Nora had built to the workshops of the property. They found the old gardener on the watch for them. He was seated on the steps; and instantly rising, he spoke a few words in a low tone to Mrs. Granville. Then he conducted her into his own room in the workshop, which communicated secretly with the prison of her lunatic mother.

The old nurse remained outside, seated on the rock steps with her staff.



CHAPTER XVI.

NICHOLAS TRAVER aroused the porter at the lodge, and in a few minutes the iron gate swung open and he rode out upon the highway. Purposeless and undecided, seeking only to drown the painful reflections aroused by the old nurse's threat, and which prevented his sleeping, he bounded along. He fancied that the excitement and novelty of a late ride

would drive away, partially at least, the apprehensions she had occasioned by acknowledging the custody of the mysterious agreement. Keenly appreciative of the romantic and the beautiful, he gazed upon the blended lights and shadows flung across the road, the curving silver bows of the little streams which occasionally rippled athwart his way, or contemplated the serene majesty of the moon, now gradually dropping towards the western horizon. But all was vain. He felt that he was in another's power, and that other was a woman. Aye! a woman who had once occupied the position of a menial in his own household. Who was she, this old nurse of sixty, so long familiar to the highland families? Why was this servant, so faithful, so invaluable, sometimes so startling when she assumed the manners of superiority, of ladyship, of rank? Why had she enveloped herself in mystery, if really she was entitled to position in society? Ah! if he could only find the clue to her secret, how quickly would he destroy her power of threatening him. Then their secrets should balance each other. But now she held the sword of exposure over him. He feared to provoke its fall. It would cleave his pride asunder, and open to the hateful gaze of society his inner life, his real self. His offer of a bribe had been flung back at him with a vehemence, with a flash of independence which gained his respect and rage. As he bounded along, these reflections would start up before his mind, and divert his thoughts from the beautiful and the grand which met him at every turn. The moonlight grew hateful to him. He checked his horse suddenly, and wheeled him back towards "The Glen." He suffered the beast to follow his own will, and after a time the horse relaxed his efforts and commenced to walk. Unmindful of the slackened pace the rider continued buried in his reverie. Finally, the steed came to a dead halt. Mr. Traver looked up and found he was standing before the iron gate at the porter's lodge. He was not disposed to enter the park yet, so he turned his horse back into the highway and allowed him to walk on

past the gate towards the north. He was now approaching the premises of Willow Bend.

His attention was soon attracted from his meditations by the hollow sound occasioned by his horse's hoofs crossing a bridge of larger dimensions than he had come across that night! Looking about him, he saw the gate of a large estate just beyond the bridge. The white balls of the gate posts were distinctly revealed in the moonlight, through an opening in the willows which bordered the stream. He had avoided that gate for years. He had determined never to enter those premises again. Then why did he ride directly up to the gate and rein his horse to a dead stop? It was an impulse, surely—one of those unaccountable dictates of the will which nearly every individual experiences some time in life. There he stood, thoughtfully, silently, that superb horseman, that peerless gentleman, gazing over the gate upon the sleeping estate. He could trace for a great distance the course of the brook through the property by the rows of drooping willows which lined the banks. Their graceful foliage seemed to be dreaming in the moonbeams. At other points the branches of ancient elms cast shadows upon the meadow, and they, too, were dreaming, motionless. So peaceful and quiet seemed the place, that one might fancy care and suffering had never gained access to the inmates of the cottage which appeared faintly in the distance.

Curiosity at length took possession of the thoughtful horseman, for he leaned forwards, and, opening the gate with the butt of his riding-whip, he walked his horse into the estate. He purposed at first only to take a brief survey of the condition of the property, and then retire quietly back into the highway. But as the easy pace of his steed brought him further and further along under the alluring trees and through the meadow glistening with dew-drops, he concluded to pass in the rear of the barns, and make a complete circuit of the estate, avoiding the cottage. Slowly the horse paced on his way, as if involved in the same enchantment as his master.

With arching neck and stately tread, his long white tail sweeping the dew-gemmed grass, he moved quietly along, with the moonlight and shadow fluttering upon his glistening iron-grey coat. The rider gained the rear of the barns, and passing through their shadows, emerged into the open space beyond. Perfect silence reigned as he paused to look at the cottage, once so familiar to him. No doubt the inmates were long since buried in slumber. Could it be possible that light was shining through the windows of the sitting-room? He examined the house more closely, recalling the formation of the rooms upon the ground-floor as he had known them. He could not be mistaken. That was the room where so often he had met his beautiful ward in the years gone by. Could it be possible that she was sitting up there with a lamp so long after midnight? Curiosity prompted him to take a look at her, after so many years of separation. He would steal up to the window and noiselessly contemplate that loveliness from which he had detached happiness for ever. She would never know it. No one would ever know it. He turned his horse back into the shadow of the barns, and dismounting, secured the bridle to a post. Then he carefully approached the cottage, covering his advance by every favorable shadow of tree or shrub. He reached the window, and cautiously peered in. A lamp was burning on the high mantelpiece, but the room was untenanted. A door was open into an adjoining apartment, which he recollected was once used for a sleeping-room. He was disappointed. The fair tenant had no doubt retired, and neglected to extinguish her lamp. He stood and reflected for several minutes silently.

Nicholas Traver was possessed of a strong will. Seldom was he thwarted in any purpose which he undertook. After studying for a time his next step, he concluded to examine the exterior of the house further before deciding upon forcing an entry. He stole along the side of the cottage and turned the corner. The frame of a window was apparent, but the

moonlight illumined that entire side of the dwelling. If any one was awake, his figure would be distinctly visible. He crawled close to the ground till he was directly under the window. Then slowly he raised his head, from which he had removed his hat, to the level of the window-sill. Instantly he dropped to the earth again. To his surprise, the window was open. After waiting a moment, and hearing no sound within, he ventured to raise himself and look again. The moonbeams betrayed to his gaze every object in the apartment. No one was there except a little girl sleeping upon a bed close to the window. Her sweet face was turned towards him, so close that he could detect her gentle breathing. She was bathed in moonlight, and in her delicate hands, which were outside the coverlet, was clasped an exquisite white lily. It was little Zoe dreaming of her dear angels. Bewildered by this unexpected apparition of loveliness, he bent over her and scanned her features. A low, sweet note of tenderness was faintly sounded in the depths of his heart. It was his own child, and for the first time he was looking upon her face. Her infant hours of mirth and sorrow had passed away, never to return, and of her baby history he was as ignorant as if he had lived beyond the seas. Months and years had stolen by; the little hands had learned to clench and firmly hold the beautiful flowers of God's creation; the hair had lengthened and learned to wander in curls, the little mouth had assumed character, and the shoulders and arms had been developed in grace and beauty. And now the father contemplated, not his infant, but his exquisite little girl. She was as beautiful a casket as ever guards an immortal soul. His own perfect taste pronounced her faultless, and a keen sting of remorse darted to his heart that she was born to shame. Aye! there slept an everlasting witness to his broken promise and his lost honor. That dear, lovely child, with an angel's face, and a tender, sensitive nature, he had doomed to a lonely and wretched life. The world would spit in that innocent little face, the

world would trample down those little hands, if they dared to reach forth for the honorable and honored crown of womanhood; marriage—marriage with refinement and rank. And he alone had done it. He alone had betrayed the confidence and trusting love of a woman who would willingly have opened the veins of her body and suffered her blood to flow to save him from suffering or death. Here was the innocent witness, clasping the pure lily, and dreaming of the only father her little yearning heart had ever known—her Father in Heaven. The unhappy author of her shame raised his hand and pressed it firmly against his temples, as if the agony of his remorse was burning deeper and deeper into his brain. His favorite child Walter was murdered; his brilliant daughter, Grace, would learn in time to look upon her father with loathing for sacrificing her young life to decrepitude and misery; and who would love him then? Could that lovely sleeper ever learn to regard with affection one who had robbed her mother of honor and herself of hope? Hush! she murmurs in her sleep.

“Dear angel, will Zoe have a father up there—way up there above the stars, like the father other little girls have? Will he love Zoe and smoothe her hair, and call her his darling little girl. Yes! take the lily—tell me, tell me; I will give you all my flowers.”

The little hands eagerly extended upwards in her sleep, as if she saw the angel coming for the lily. Some one had been teaching the child the superstitions of the day—God and Heaven and angels. What if there was a God? What if there really were places of reward and punishment? What if the pure and the upright were wafted in the arms of angels to a home of peace and holiness and joy? Where was the spirit of his murdered boy—his noble, pure-minded, praying, God-fearing Walter? Where was the pure spirit of his long-lost wife? Where would Nicholas Traver spend eternity, if death should meet him that night? Would the eyes of loved ones be parted from him for ever in that far-off world

of the future life? Would sweetness and innocence and joy be reserved for them, and shame and horror and desolation and agony be his portion? Was this innocent, sleeping picture of loveliness, the type of heaven, and his own secret crimes the type of hell? He studied her more closely in the moonlight, and her infantile beauty and loveliness melted his heart as no sermon and no power of eloquence could ever do. That little innocence was yearning for a father's love. To a father's heart how eagerly would she hasten. How sweetly would she cling to him, and twine her arms around his neck, and press her moist, sweet lips to his, with a child's tenderness and trust. She might be reared to honor and happiness, and the dangers—the imminent hazard of ruin—might be averted from her young life. There might be kind, loving hands to close his eyes in death. His grave might not be lonely. Loving ones might kneel beside the mound and raise hopeful, tender eyes to the blue sky where his soul had winged its way. The fountain of tears was touched by the hand of innocence. The strong, proud man was subdued by the lily sceptre of his child. His lip quivered, and the penitent tears gathered to his eyes as he bent over her. A drop, which glistened diamond-like in the moonbeams, fell upon her face. She still slept on. Another and another tear fell upon her, and she awoke. It startled her—the strange, handsome face so close to her. She seemed bewildered for an instant as she rose in her bed to look at him. But his coming was too closely linked with her dream, and she asked, hopefully, “Are you my father? Did my dear angel send you?”

“Yes! yes! my little one; I *am* your father,” he murmured.

Without another word of doubt or hesitation she extended her arms and put up her face to his kiss. That gentle pressure of her lips was sweet and refreshing to his awakened soul as a bribe from Heaven to induce him to a pure life. And over the twain the guardian angels joined their wings as they knelt above them in prayer.

"Oh! do not leave little Zoe. I want to be loved like other little girls. Will you stay with me and love me?"

"I will not be gone long from you again, my child," he answered, charmed by the flute-like melody of her voice. "I will come back again. I must go away soon; but I will return. You must watch for me. You will see me some day coming through that gate yonder. You can see the gate from this window. Look out often towards that gate, and you will see me some day. I will never leave you then. What is your name, my child—what do they call you?"

She had raised herself to her knees, and put her arms around his neck. She was gazing wonderingly into his face. She answered him, eagerly turning to look over his shoulder at his promised route of approach in the future, "The angels told me you would come through that gate—did you?"

"Yes, I rode in through that gate to-night."

"Was it a grey horse?" she asked.

"Surely it was; how could you know that—did you see my horse?" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"No! I didn't see any horse, but the angels told me."

"Were you dreaming, my little one, that they told you?"

"Yes! I dreamed ever so much. I dreamed you passed by mamma, and you didn't see her; but she saw you, and then she fell down on the ground and cried. She was hid under the trees, way over there in Mrs. Baltimore's park; and then she went away, and she left something under the trees—she dropped it. Then the angels told me you was comin' to see me through the gate, on a beautiful grey horse. Where is the beautiful horse?"

"This was a singular dream, my child—for it was true—the horse is behind the barn now. But you didn't tell me your name."

"They call me Zoe—Zoe Granville is my name."

Nicholas Traver started back from the child's embrace, as

if a serpent had suddenly struck him. "Zoe Granville!" he exclaimed. "Zoe Granville! Who has dared to name you that?"

"Oh! don't be angry with little Zoe," she said, piteously; "mamma named me that—she said it was chosen for me long before I was born."

He did not reply, for some fearful emotion was aroused by the name which swept away the present like a whirlwind. The awful surging waves of the past came rolling over his soul. A chasm opened at his feet, and memory plunged headlong into the abyss. Down, far down the shadowy aisles of buried years, conscience dragged him to a lonely grave. The long-deserted mound showed distinctly now. Once that grave had been watered by his tears—tears from a wounded heart—honest, truthful tears. Once had he flung himself in the abandonment of grief upon that precious mound, and pressing his cheek to the damp grass, vowed before God and angels to live worthy of the sleeping dust which had been the star of his life; vowed to live purely, holily, that he might join her in the glorious hour of resurrection and eternal reward. How had he kept that vow? The answer was before him in the startled child that bore her sacred name. That sweet, holy name was perpetuated in his bastard child; that name which had melted in exquisite sweetness upon the pure air; that precious name, synonymous with purity and honor, was stamped upon the child of sin and shame. Oh! the humiliation, the agony, the remorse of that thought to a mind keenly sensitive to family pride and family love. Whom could he blame?—upon whom could he wreak vengeance for this desecration of that dear name? Himself—himself alone. When he wound the coils of his fascination about that lovely, trusting girl's heart, when he offered to her acceptance the name of wife, he had demanded that if a daughter was born to their nuptials she should bear the maiden name of his own mother—his sainted mother in heaven. How could the poor creature, ever relying with idolatry upon the sacred-

ness of his promise and his honor, do otherwise than fulfil her own promise. Believing that some time he would return to marry her, as he had sworn, she named her child with mingled hopes and tears.

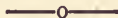
He returned to the child's embrace again, as some generous impulse was awakened in his heart by this touching evidence of her mother's trust and constancy to him. There is always a time for repentance, a time for reparation, a time to start once more on the path of rectitude—no matter how far one has gone astray. The impulses of reform and justice are the opportunities God sends. There is always a something which is best, and just, and proper to be done. For Nicholas Traver, in that revival hour of conscience, there was a clear path to pursue. Marry the woman who had sacrificed all to love of him. She was his equal in position and education and refinement. He could satisfy the claims of justice by secretly marrying her and avowing before the world that she was his wife and permit that world to infer that they had always legally been joined together. Then Zoe would have a claim to respect, and the bleeding heart of her unfortunate mother would be soothed. No doubt the demand of justice was hard. The penalty of sin is always hard. But the anger of God is harder still. Better far was it to conciliate the Ruler of Heaven now. The impulse to repent and do right waxed in power, and Nicholas Traver resolved to accept the opportunity.

He knew not how long he tarried with his child at the window. Her winning voice, her increasing confidence in her newly found parent, her avowal of her strange visions of the spiritual world, all held him captive beside her. The tendrils of affection strengthened and lengthened every moment as they talked, and he forgot the anxieties and apprehensions which had sent him forth from "The Glen" on his lonely night ride. But at length he was aroused to consciousness of the late hour by the moon falling below the horizon. It was nearly morning. It excited his wonder

when Zoë informed him that her mother had gone out late to walk, as was her custom. The little girl was confident that she must be walking in the park of "The Glen," for so her dear angels had informed her that night. Hoping to meet his former ward on the highway, as he deemed it impossible for her to gain access to the park except through the gate at the porter's lodge, he bade his child farewell, and turned away from the window. When he reached the barns he looked back and saw the little figure in her night-dress, standing before the window, as if to secure a last glimpse of his receding form. "Poor little darling fairy," he muttered, "she must be reared a lady, and never know of shame and reproach." In another moment he had regained his saddle, and with difficulty found his road to the gate in the darkness.

When he had reached the highway he walked his horse slowly along towards "The Glen," narrowly examining every object on his way. He paused often to listen, but no sound rewarded his vigilance. No one was walking on the road. Could it be possible that the child's dream was correct, and that her mother was really in the park? He would question the porter. No one could enter that gate unnoticed. Continuing his vigilance and inspection of the road, he finally arrived at the lodge. After considerable delay in arousing the custodian of the gate, he was admitted to the park. In reply to his inquiry, the porter informed him that no one but himself had passed the gate after sunset. He rode on then under the oaks and maples, and the porter went off to bed grumbling at the unreasonableness of people in being out at such strange hours of the night. The horseman continued his slow and vigilant pace through the park. When he was near the front of the mansion, he halted and listened attentively for several minutes. No sound met his ear. It was the silent hour which precedes the dawn. He made the circuit of the mansion and arrived at the stables, apparently unnoticed. He conducted his horse to the stall

from which he had taken him, and finding that he had aroused the hostler, he went to him, and enjoining upon him silence as to the night expedition, slipped into his hand a silver dollar. Then he cautiously approached his apartments. Congratulating himself upon the secrecy which had attended his movements, he was on the point of opening the door under his porch, when a broad glare of light was flung upon him from a lantern suddenly thrust from one of the upper windows of the front house. Before he could turn to identify the holder of the lantern, the light was withdrawn. He could see its departing rays dancing on the ceiling of the upper room as the unknown watcher passed on into the house. He believed it could be no other than the old nurse who had dogged his footsteps in the garden.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE blended songs of the early birds greeted the rising sun. From their leafy coverts they warbled the glad tidings of a new-born day, or, wheeling their musical flights over the garden, alighted at intervals upon the shrubbery; where, poised on fairy feet, they balanced and swung in the welcome rays streaming aslant from the orient. The flowers looked up and smiled, the shadows fled, the dew gave forth its glistening tears of joy, then vanished in the increasing warmth. Higher and higher ascended the sun over the silent garden, and found no visitor upon the carefully swept and curving paths between the flowers, save the aged gardener, who vigorously plied his hoe among the beds, or rested at intervals to scan the glorious beauty of his silent companions. Born and bred to the society of flowers, the old man had learned to talk to them as to pet children. He

clothed them with human attributes; he delicately soothed their sensitive natures, and nursed their young life with tenderness and pride, or mourned in accents of sadness over their drooping death. When they faded and died on their stems, he was wont to look heavenward, as if he hoped their gentle spirits bloomed again beside the golden streets of Paradise, in more exquisite beauty.

He had chosen a warm and sheltered spot on the south side of the largest greenhouse for his darling exotics. Proud and happy to occupy again his old place of custodian of the flowers, he was determined, by constancy and excessive care, to raise in the open air a brilliant circle of roses native to a more southern clime. He had succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectations, and while the great gardens under his care bloomed with clusters and trellises of native roses on every hand, this favored spot was glowing with the rich colors and graceful figures of the southern strangers. The dew had scarcely dried on their crimson and scarlet leaves as he stood over them, studying their loveliness and maturing his plans to preserve them until the new mistress of "The Glen" should look upon their rare beauty. As he leaned upon his hoe, and wondered whether the new proprietor possessed taste enough to appreciate the delicate task of his hands, and would sympathize with his old heart in his adoration of nature, he was startled by a footstep close beside him. Turning, he beheld a lady robed in a dark dress, who was contemplating him with eyes large, brilliant, and beautiful. In the backward sweep of her glistening black hair clung a white rose. She wore the garb of a mourner, and the language of the contrasting flower is "sadness."

A lady of refined taste satisfies her curiosity by a rapid penetrating glance. The eyelashes of the stranger slightly drooped again as she quietly asked:

"Are you Weaver, the former gardener of the Baltimore family?"

"Yes—yes! my lady," replied the old man, nervously

raising his hand to his straw hat, "that's my name—Nathan Weaver's my name, and I've worked these gardens, I've no doubt, many a year afore your eyes saw the light. I've grown up on this property like one of those trees you see yunder—I sort of belong to the place. 'Twas allers my home. I seldom lived a day off this place, madam—seldom a day till the last Mister Baltimore went abroad."

He stole several glances at the interrogator as he spoke, and the impressions her personal appearance created were favorable, for he removed his hat entirely from his head, and bowing low at the conclusion of his reply, he said :

"I am addressing, I believe, my new mistress, Mrs. Baltimore?"

"Yes," she answered, "I am Mrs. Baltimore. I could not sleep, and I thought a walk in the fresh early air of the morning might revive me. But what exquisite roses have you there? They don't look like the flowers I have been accustomed to look upon in this latitude."

"They're southern roses, madam," he replied, replacing his hat on his head, and stooping to brush off a worm which made its appearance upon the edge of a rose-bud. "They allers raises 'em in green-houses as far north as this. But you see I thought it would be a compliment like, to treat the new mistress to a bed of rare flowers raised in the open air. I've worked my reglar time in the open garden, and then after hours, I turned my attention and care to these. I've watched close, my lady, these delicate creeters, so as to have 'em live. Some ladies has more taste nor others about flowers, and old Weaver feels proud for your noticing 'em. Indeed I do—indeed I do. You spoke true when you said they was exersite—they is the most exersite flowers as ever was seen on this property. Let me pluck one for you; they can't last long now, and you must examine 'em close. This 'ere is the 'Giant of Battles;' just look at that shade of crimson—bright crimson velvet I'd call it; now what a color for a dress—jest you look at it and smoothe your fingers over the

leaves ; isn't it a beauty. You keep it—I'll find some more to put with it ; 'ere is the darlin' rose—'ere is the very lady herself, Marie Leonidas."

He moved a few paces along the path, and with his garden shears severed from a bush a waxy-white rose with small, dark, and shining leaves, also waxy in appearance. Presenting the flower to Mrs. Baltimore, he said, enthusiastically, "There, now, you have the red giant and his fair lady. Please notice that cluster of the Giant of Battles. See how the flowers bloom high on the stem, holding their heads high among the other roses. That's the reason they calls 'em Giants. I suppose the rest of the name comes from their crimson color—Battle red, ma'am. That's the color Christians marks on each other when they goes to war—dreadful business these Christian wars, ma'am, dreadful indeed ; but jest see this rose ; this they calls the Solfaterre rose—the creamy white Solfaterre—that's the exact name. You see, ma'am, the flower is large and so unusually soft ; now look at those leaves. You see next to the stalk they 're soft green, but not shiny green. As they extend towards the end of the branch, they change gradually from green to a transparent brown. You see at this end of the branch they 're very small leaves, and quite brown. And here's a fresh bud for you ; this is the pink daily rose—every day a fresh bud. They is truly beautiful in the bud, but not much when full blown ; like some girls, ma'am, they promise well, but the storms of life shakes their color and beauty out of 'em right early. Was you askin' the name of this large pink rose ? That's 'La Reine'—deep pink petals, very double and tight together—it don't lose its shape and grow flat and flabby at the bottom, like other roses. It holds itself firm and erect to the last in most a bowl form, as if, ma'am, it never forgets its dignity ; that's how she gets her name. I don't wonder at your taste, ma'am ; you shall have one of that ar' kind. That I'd call a velvety crimson ; they call it—let me see ef I can speak it now—'Jacqueminot.' Is that right, ma'am ? I most believe it's

called for a French general; of course you know, my lady. Yes, well! I 'sposed I was right. You're right, ma'am. I'll pick one of those for you; they calls that the 'Souvenir de mon ami' rose. Now, how sweet that is as you hold it up to the light—rich pink centre, shading into a salmon color, and ye see that salmon shades outward agin into a light cream color. Do ye notice, ma'am, the green leaves are shaded like the leaves of that Solfaterre rose—that creamy white Solfaterre? And here's a Luxembourg, and here's a Hermosa rose; you must have these to make the bouquet kimplete. And here's another—a small white satin rose—that's the 'Lady Walworth.' Now your bouquet looks splendid, and Old Weaver's proud to see ye carryin' it. Now ef ye will please step this 'ere way, I'll show ye the waterfall—that's what I calls it."

Moving along after the old man, with his shears and hoe, Mrs. Baltimore came to a lofty trellis built at the end of the green-house. There was a striking resemblance to a rosy waterfall in the mass of transparent white roses which clung to the trellis. "They're Baltimore belles—that's the name—and each one is as fair and delicate as a bride. I had a heap of trouble in raisin' those roses, for they belongs further south nor this."

The lady had followed the old man around the circle, amused at his enthusiasm, and suffering him to talk on, with little interruption, as he plucked the rare flowers and placed them in her hand. But when her eyes took in the wonderful shower of roses which fell from the trellis, she exclaimed, "Weaver, you are a gem—a real gem. I wouldn't lose your good taste in growing flowers for the world. This is a treat for me, and I thank you. Oh! how much I thank you for your trouble."

The old man fairly trembled with excitement. His trouble and his faithful watching had not been thrown away then. She appreciated the labor of his aged hands. He answered her with a smile of joy and pride.

"I kin tell when I see a lady, and I knew ye would love the flowers when I looked into your eyes. But I niver was called a gem afore. Old Weaver ain't much like a gem—the settin' amost wore out, and the soul as is in me is dim with age; but there's a true heart in here, ma'am, and it will serve ye till the sods is heaped up on my body. It's very kind of ye to speak so to the old man that strives to do his duty, and I pray the Lord to spare yer life and make ye happy, and——"

He tried right valiantly to carry out his sentence, but she had touched his tender old heart, and his lips murmured towards the close. Then, making an effort to control his feelings, he looked up and said:

"And so it appears ye love natur like some other folks do, and the flowers and the grass and the trees is a comfort to ye sometimes."

Love nature? The question awoke some powerful emotion in those dark eyes. Does the mother, from whom death has snatched every idol but one, love the graceful child who comes in the stillness of the evening to stand by her side, and putting its little hand in hers, says, by its silence and attitude, "I love you?" Does the thirsty pilgrim of the desert, fainting and deserted by his companions, love the shady dell which unexpectedly rises upon his vision and tells of the crystal water which nourishes its verdure? Does the wanderer in a strange land love the familiar notes of a home-song, which greet him in his loneliness, and fill his eyes with tears? Then did the heart of the young widow love and exult in the simple word pronounced by the aged gardener as he leaned upon his hoe, and waited for her reply. To whom could she turn for sympathy and love? She, the child torn from home in her tender years, and while her young soul was yearning to believe only in the existence of honor and truth, sacrificed to old age and meanness! The nobler feelings of her nature had been appealed to, and she had proved herself, child as she was, equal to any demand. To

save her beloved father's life, the young girl had gone forth to the martyrdom of all the hope and pride and affection of maidenhood. The pure wreath of coming love and tenderness which every girl of fifteen sees pendent from the palace of the future, she had laid upon the altar of filial affection. Such was her unbounded faith in her father's nobility of character, that she had accepted the mysterious crown of thorns, and for six weary years worn it in unquestioning silence. She had never known her mother's love. The bud had appeared but an instant on the bush, when the full-blown rose fell to its grave. The brother to whom she had looked across the seas for future solace and sympathy, had mysteriously fallen murdered to the earth. Then she turned to her sole surviving relative for whom she had sacrificed so much, and expected, now that her husband had passed away, the reward of full confidence and entire explanation. Alas! her father was as mysterious and reticent as ever. Then the developed powers of intellect and reason asserted their sway. Why had she been sacrificed? Why was she still a victim of the mysterious darkness? Why was she not, now in her young womanhood, entitled to confidence and trust? She had lived a slave to rescue her parent. She had been trampled upon for his sake. Her pride and self-respect had been mutilated to save him; and now was the time to speak. His evasions and postponements were unjust now. She had returned triumphant and superior from the ordeal of her repulsive marriage, and she could claim entire confidence and love from the only relative she possessed on this side the grave. But the confidence was denied her; and her sensitive soul shrank back into itself, and suspicion wreathed itself about the portals of her heart. The consciousness of evil erected a barrier between the parent and his child; and she, who had been willing to deny herself all, would not be denied all in return. With a cry of mortal agony, she parted from him and the interview, and fell down moaning upon the desert of her lonely life. Oh! she could be so

happy with him if he would only sympathize and confide; but, alas! he would not; he *dare* not speak. Then the wealth which had promised so much, lost its illusions. The poor creature craved sympathy and love. For these she would willingly deed to him all her lands, her possessions, and her treasures. As the hope of securing these gradually faded away, and she felt that she was indeed alone in the world, the voices of nature broke from the thickets. The warble of God's little birds called to her. His graceful flowers nodded welcome to her; the trees whispered to her, and the brooks sang. Mounted on her snow-white steed, and attended only by the dog Bounce, she penetrated the wild places, and scaled the cliffs. Here was congenial nourishment for her great soul. She looked downwards to the river and the haunts of men, or her eye followed the flight of the eagle as he disappeared in the blue vault of heaven. These sublime views enlarged her soul, aroused her generous impulses, spoke to her of God and eternity. They partially supplied the void in her heart, and she learned self-reliance and self-control. Nature bounteously rewards those who commune closely with her and study her mysteries, and sometimes startles her worshippers by the blinding vision of God revealed in his works.

Mrs. Baltimore learned from her communings with the sublime and the beautiful the lesson of humanity. A God capable of such wonderful creations—so vast, and yet so minute—so diverse, and yet so tenderly defended and nourished in the detail, must claim equal care for His creations from the hands of mortals. Respect and care for His creations must increase with the value and importance of the object created. Human beings delicately framed and endowed with the attributes of angels, and fashioned for immortality, must be cared for as the heirs of the kingdom. Whenever she returned from her wild rides among the cliffs, or from the elevated plateau where she could look more closely into the blue vault of heaven, it was noticed that her purse

opened wider, her voice was more sweetly modulated, and her eyes burned with a more sympathetic lambent light. She had been a little nearer to Heaven, and her heart had caught a spark which fell from the altars of its charity.

Old Weaver knew nothing of this, however. She had been a tenant at "The Glen" only a few weeks, and had not before made her appearance upon his precincts. He was both astonished and delighted then by her reply to his remark.

"Yes! nature is my delight, and my constant source of pleasure and consolation. I love art; I love music, too, which is the highest manifestation of art. But that which germinates and grows, and droops in graceful figures, without the fashioning of human hands—that is my joy and careful study; for it is more especially the work of God. I wonder if the angels don't descend and nurse these rare flowers! It would seem that only an angel's delicate hands could curve this rose-leaf so accurately and so beautifully."

She placed her finger upon a flower in her bouquet as she spoke, and gently stroked the velvet of its crimson leaf. Observing, after a silence of a few minutes, that her companion made no reply, she raised her eyes from the flower. The old man was steadily regarding her. She fancied his eyes wore an inquiring expression, for she said quickly:

"You look as if you wanted to ask me something. Do not hesitate to express your wishes or your curiosity."

"You are very quick, my lady," said the amazed gardener. "You read people's thoughts so quick. I only wanted to ask a little favor, that perhaps ye would be willing to grant an old servant."

"Speak it out," was the prompt response.

Thus encouraged, he began: "In the parlor of the old house, if it please ye to remember, there hangs a portrait of a lady."

"The portraits of several ladies hang there," was the quick rejoinder. "Which one do you mean?"

"I'll tell ye, my lady. It is a picture as one can't well

forgit that's ever looked on it. The dress and all is mighty curious; I never looked on its like. The frame is amost worn out. The lady has curling hair and the queerest three-cornered cap on top of her head that I ever laid eyes on—it's velvet, I should say, and there's tassels hangin' from the corners of it."

"You are certainly mistaken, Weaver," was her answer. "There is no such picture in the house. Perhaps you have mistaken the locality."

The old man shook his head, while a smile illumined his aged and wrinkled features.

"No, no, my lady! I'm old, it's true, and some old people forgits. But Nathan Weaver is reputed the best man to remember in this neighborhood. And it's not many years since I looked upon the picture. If me mem'ry serves me right, I seen the lady's face hangin' in yunder parlor jest afore the last Mister Baltimore packed up his things to cross the seas. 'Twas close upon that time, anyway. The picture, by rights, should be hangin' there now. It wud be mighty strange ef your ladyship has crossed the floor of that room and never took notice of the queer dress and the three-cornered cap. It's there, ma'am, trust me word for it. Me eyes hasn't seen it these six years; but no person wud think of removin' the lady's face from the house, except it was to put a new frame onto it. Now ef old Weaver can presume upon yer kindness, I'd like to look upon that face agin. She was kind to me father when he worked this same gardin afore me. I often heard him say she were the splendifest lady of her time. She kept up the dignity of this place like a princess. She were mighty proud, they say, consarnin' her family. She were the grandest Baltimore that ever walked through this ere gardin. But me father—he told me most everybody loved her. She were not so grand but that she had a good heart. She were kind to the poor folks; and the old people like me father wud tell of the grand things she did. Perhaps, me lady, my discourse is not pleasing to ye?"

He had detected a serious expression cross her features, and feared he had presumed too much upon her listening to his gossip. But she bade him go on and describe the eyes of the portrait.

"Dark eyes, my lady, dark, and sort of lookin' right into you. But it *is* strange ef yer eyes has overlooked the picture. The cap is so queer, and the like of it few of the old people in these parts kin remember."

"Weaver, you are certainly mistaken. I always study, with a great deal of interest, old family portraits. I have examined carefully every one in this house, and there is nothing like the one you speak of."

"It don't become me to dispute with your ladyship; but I will say ef the picture of Mrs. Gertrude Baltimore has bin removed from the gallery of paintings of her proud family, it's enough to wake the dead. Will ye please to look once more at the pictures, jest to gratify an old man? It will reward ye for the trouble jest to look upon the queer thing."

His confidence in the truth of his assertions amused Mrs. Baltimore; and she said, pleasantly:

"Well, lay aside your hoe and shears and come with me, and see if you are able to point out the picture to me: there must be something strange about the matter."

She walked on leisurely towards the house, bearing her choice bouquet and enjoying the fresh odors of the early morning. The old man, having laid aside his garden tools, and divested himself of his overalls, went to a fountain to wash the dirt from his hands. In a few moments he had overtaken his mistress at the old stone porch of the Baltimores. He gave his shoes one more thorough wiping upon the grass-plat, and then reverently removing his hat entered the ancient dwelling after her. She had flung open the shutters of the parlor and the morning sun poured into the long apartment. She now stood quietly in the centre of the room watching the old man's movements. He advanced confidently to a portrait of her late husband and glanced at the

wall on either side of it. He raised his aged weather-beaten hand to shield his eyes and looked slowly and carefully through the entire apartment. He desisted from his search, and said, completely baffled, as he pointed to a place on the wall: "It's gone, sure enough; but I'll take me Bible-oath there's the place I saw it last. It passes all the power of me old brains to think what kin have become of it. It's sacrilege, my lady! It's wicked for man or woman to take away the like of that, and Nathan Weaver's the man that says it. Ef I was in yer place I'd ask; but never mind, I'm a ridiculous old man, and I feel as ef I'd made a fool of myself—that I do. Well, well! but it's queer enough!"

He had been on the point of putting his mistress on the proper track of inquiry, but a quick consciousness saved him, and he concluded to let matters take their own course. It was evident that he had introduced trouble into the old house, and a pang of regret darted through his heart at the reflection that he might have been the cause of securing censure for his friend, old Nora. If any one was held responsible for the loss of the picture, it would surely be she, or the tenant who protected the property before her. But this reticence came too late. The mistress of the house was aroused, and she always acted promptly. Requesting the dismayed old gardener to wait, she advanced to the servants' bell and rang it with decided vehemence. Mrs. Grace Baltimore was possessed of unquestionable promptness in arranging her domestic affairs. Some one had transgressed the law of order in removing the portrait. The sooner the law was vindicated, the better for the security of the future. A manservant answered the bell. He looked surprised to see his mistress so early in the morning. He bowed in the doorway, and said: "Your pleasure, madam?"

"Go directly and inform all the servants that I am waiting for them in the parlor; I mean all, except the servants of my guests."

"They're not all up yet; it's early, ma'am."

"Make them get up, then; it's time they were all at their work. Do they rise at this hour every morning?"

"Yes, ma'am."

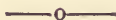
"Very well. I want their attendance here directly. I will wait for them."

The servant disappeared. During his absence old Weaver looked the picture of despair. It was dawning upon his brain that the portrait of Gertrude Baltimore might have been removed by Nora Rudd, who loved her memory dearly. Mrs. Baltimore paced up and down the apartment, pondering the matter, evidently, for she turned once to the gardener and asked: "You are quite sure the portrait hung beside the picture of my husband?"

"Just there, my lady; I've seen it often, and it allers was in the same place," replied the old man, dreadfully perplexed as to the probable result of his ill-timed curiosity. He could not but observe, however, how gracefully the young widow moved back and forth amid the new and elegant furniture of the room, and he wondered what the ancient portraits of the proud family could think of the new mistress, who appeared so perfectly at home as she swept her dark train along their ancient heritage. She was a living picture, fresh and exhilarated by the pure air of the morning. A peach-flush lingered upon her cheeks, and the sunbeams glistened upon her silken hair where the white rose clung. She retained possession of her rare bouquet, and occasionally raised it to enjoy its fragrance.

They had not to wait long. Indications of an aroused household were accumulating in the distant parts of the mansion. Opening and shutting of doors were followed soon after by the appearance of several servants of both sexes. When they were all assembled, Mrs. Baltimore requested Weaver to describe the missing portrait as accurately as he was able. He complied with the request, and then the mistress of the house demanded of the assembled servants any information they might possess in regard to it.

One of the maids declared that she had been present at "The Glen" from the first ; that she was employed by Mrs. Rudd to clean the family pictures, and that no such portrait of a lady had been at any time in the house since her arrival. This appeared to settle the matter as far as the servants were concerned ; and they were dismissed, and directed to send Mrs. Rudd to the parlor. Upon further examination, it was ascertained that old Nora had gone at a very early hour to the stables and ordered the horse and vehicle. She was accustomed to drive about the country. Where she had gone no one knew. The proceeding was not an uncommon one for her, and Weaver was dismissed to the garden until another and more favorable occasion.



CHAPTER XVIII.

PEACEFULLY, calmly, glided the hours at "The Glen." The easy and graceful hospitality of its mistress charmed all, and even the prejudiced Englishman, Sir Francis Cleveland, was forced to admit the possibility of an American house being properly appointed and conducted. Every convenience to which he had been accustomed at home was promptly furnished to him by the servants without a murmur, and without any of that appearance of extraordinary effort which so often nullifies a favor. The domestics understood perfectly that they were employed to make existence agreeable, and that no failure in the performance of their duties would go unpunished, and no unusual effort remain unrewarded by their mistress. She exacted the utmost deference and attention from them. She generously compensated labor that encroached upon their accustomed leisure. But promptness and cheerfulness, respect and courtesy, were expected ; and servants devoid of these qualities, soon found the front door.

Sickness among them received attention and sympathy in the person of their mistress. They learned to respect her, and in respect germinates the pleasure of domestic life. This perfect household arrangement gratified the English guests. It was unexpected in an American mansion. Sir Francis Cleveland was reported to be a suitor for the hand of the young widow. Whatever the facts in the case might be, it is certain no action of Mrs. Baltimore confirmed the rumor. She enjoyed his cultivated society, and appreciated his learning and accomplishments. But those who saw them often together were conscious of a delicate veil of reserve interposed between the two in their most familiar moments of intercourse. He was more frequently her escort in the daily rides on horseback than others. But at "The Glen," in the drawing-rooms, or in the gardens, or seated before the piano, where she was omnipotent in her power and melody of voice, a young gentleman of the neighborhood, accomplished, wealthy, and twenty-five, was oftener her companion. He rejoiced in the name of Charles Delavan, and was a thorough gentleman, with a fine tenor voice, a grey eye, brown curling hair, and heavy moustache. He was a gallant, high-toned fellow, and a universal favorite through the country. He had arrived at the house with his sister Mary, to spend several weeks, at the invitation of Mrs. Baltimore, whose father was an intimate friend of the elder Delavan. The remaining guests were the artist Rogers, who had planned the decorations of "The Glen," and his sister Lucretia, and Mrs. Baltimore's two uncles, Hugh and Reynolds Winchester, both under thirty, and witty and brilliant in conversation. The two last were looking for wives, and wealth was an indispensable requisite. It would be difficult to congregate in one private residence a more elegant and congenial circle of friends. No parties or balls were expected, as the mistress of the property was in mourning. Nevertheless they were never at a loss for amusement, and while the spirit of Terpsichore slumbered, Cupid held court in the ample rooms and abun-

dant alcoves, or sauntered through the arbors and shady nooks of the estate. The stables were supplied with a superb collection of horses, and the guests rode out, when they were so inclined, in pairs, or more frequently in cavalcades, embracing all the party, and destined for some picnic excursion or romantic road leading through the highlands. Just in the rear of the estate flowed a stream of pure, crystal water, which, a mile above, effected a junction with the brook of "The Glen." It wandered silently under rocky banks, or broke in ripples where its pebbly bed was shaded by the forest shrubbery; and through its more hidden pools and recesses darted speckled trout. Some of the gentlemen wandered in warm days to this secluded wood, and angled for the cautious denizens of the water. It was a dreamy, romantic spot, where the fancies of Nature's poets could be read with renewed interest, and the whispering trees seemed to chime in with the melody of the rhythm. There were sequestered nooks, however, at a shorter distance. The pine-bordered glen afforded opportunities for bowers, where the sun never penetrated, and where the rustic seats were near enough to the brook for their occupants to catch the low, plashing melody of the water, as it murmured its musical complaints to the pines, or dropped suddenly into a fissure of its rocky bed with a hollow, gurgling monotone. Curving paths wandered along the banks, and at one point a rustic bridge of unhewn oaks gave access to the south side, where the hand of art was stayed in deference to the wilder charms of Nature. On this neglected bank the rocks were lofty and moss-covered, forming at one unexpected turn of the wild path a small cavern, where two persons could stand with ease and slake their thirst from a basin hewn in the rock to catch the trickling water from the spring concealed in the cliff above. An antique drinking-cup of iron, brought by Mrs. Baltimore from the ruins of Pompeii, stood upon this basin and bore the classical inscription, "*Exopto.*"

The apartment in the mansion most frequented by the

guests during the sultry days of summer was styled "The Saloon." It had been constructed in the new building or addition, according to the instructions transmitted to Mrs. Rudd from Europe. It was at least sixty feet in length and thirty in width. The ceiling was lofty, and the floor was composed of alternate polished slabs of blue and white marble. Directly in the centre of this spacious hall was a fountain of snow-white marble, fashioned in the shape of a huge sea-shell, around whose edge clung mermaids bathing their tresses in the waters, or flinging jets of water at each other from their palms, in streams which crossed each other and then fell in graceful curves to the shell basin. In the centre of the shell stood a solitary mermaid erect, with her finger pointing upwards, and the jet of water from it rising nearly to the ceiling of the saloon, and then falling in showers of crystals upon her shoulders. This queen of the nautical tribe appeared to receive a large share of the fluid favors directed by her attendants at each other. The walls of the apartment were of glistening white, relieved at intervals by frescoes of blue lily-wreaths, with a bluebird for a centre. The divans scattered through this cool retreat were of white marble, delicately carved in semblances of birds and flowers, and their tops were covered by long cushions of blue silk, of the same shade as the wreaths of lilies on the walls. The short arm-cushions, to relieve the reclining posture, were of the same silk, elaborately embroidered in white silk flowers and fruits. The Gothic windows were screened by Venetian blinds, painted a light cream color, and somewhere hidden behind them was an Æolian harp, ever and anon wailing in sweetness at the whisper of the freshening breeze. A few lounging chairs of bamboo were scattered through the saloon. The ceiling overhead was a sky-blue, with silver stars. The apartment was designed simply for a place of retreat in oppressively hot weather, when the rich warm colors of the drawing-rooms, and the circular dining-room and library, were repugnant to a sense of cool comfort. The

summer breezes were courted in constructing it, and it became a favorite retreat for the guests. Near the divan, at one extremity of the saloon, stood the marble statue "Modesty," on a pedestal. At the other end, and near a divan, the statue "Vigilance" looked from a pedestal across the room at the bashful maid of marble, as if intent upon aiding her to sustain her retiring character. The marbles had attracted the attention of Mrs. Baltimore in Italy. The arrangement of the statues was the idea of Old Nora, whose taste was confirmed by the artist, Rogers. There was no door, properly speaking; but access was obtained to the saloon from the hall by an arch, with blue silk curtains and tassels. The curtains, at the apex of the arch, were held in the beak of a white marble dove, the emblem of peace and repose. The plashing of the fountain, the murmurs of the hidden harp of the winds, and the coolness of the place, made it a favorite resort for lovers. Private conversation might easily be maintained at the extremities of the apartment, and the divans protected by "Vigilance" and "Modesty," were frequently tenanted when the other parts of the saloon were enlivened by the jest and the song.

One oppressively hot morning, the guests and their hostess had sought refuge in the saloon, and were grouped as follows: Nicholas Traver was seated on the divan by the statue of "Vigilance," conversing in a low earnest tone with Miss Angier, whose eyes were cast downwards at the closed book in her lap. She was listening attentively to his musical, polished utterances, occasionally interposing a brief sentence, and then glancing cautiously around the room, as if to detect the thoughts of the other loungers upon her retired *tête-à-tête*. Miss Cleveland occupied the seat beside the statue of "Modesty," in company with Hugh Winchester, whose conversation evidently verged upon the ridiculous, as her merry peals of laughter at intervals testified. His brother, Reynolds, was entertaining the artist's sister at a game of chess near the fountain. Mary Delavan was sitting for her por-

trait to Rogers, whose narrative of adventure was calculated to arouse her languid blue eyes to the openness and brilliancy which he was anxious to secure for the eyes on his canvas, and which rendered her, at times of excitement or marked interest, so transcendently beautiful. She was resting her bare arm upon a small table, and the tip of a dainty foot stole from under the hem of her white muslin dress. Her style was languishing, dreaming; a blonde, whose complexion would have entitled her to the appellation "angelic," had not her figure partaken so decidedly of the fulness of Hebe. The artist interrupted the flow of his own narrative at length by the remark: "I shall insist upon your wearing another shade of dress at your next sitting. I find my eyes dazzled by painting nothing but snow, snow, with no colors to relieve my vision."

A smile stole languidly to the features of the fair girl, as she evaded the compliment by the quiet remark: "I should think snow would be the most grateful object for the sense of sight such weather as this; but be kind enough to go on with your interesting description. It will be time enough to don my velvet when you have finished my hair. No doubt the weather will moderate by that time. But I trust you will never complete the hair, if you are as entertaining every day as you are this. Please paint on for ever, for I am living in dreams at your story; and that is a compliment, coming from me, though capable of another construction."

"You are a dream, yourself," murmured the artist, in a tone that no one could hear but his companion. A slight blush was aroused by his manner as he looked at her in pronouncing these words. She made no response. A change in her attitude was the only evidence that the delicate arrow of Cupid had stirred the depths of her languid life. While Rogers transferred Mary Delavan's face to his canvas, and probably also to his heart, Mrs. Baltimore entertained the two gentlemen, Sir Francis Cleveland and Charles Delavan. The two last were seated near the arch, engrossed by the

energy and vividness with which she portrayed the character of modern Italians, and vindicated their claims to self-government, independent of foreign interference. Her eyes blazed with the generous emotions aroused by her subject. The long, dark eyelashes were lifted as she glanced first at one and then at the other of her auditors, and a witchery clung to her very accent; and the powerful imagery she employed, fascinated by its novelty and appropriateness. In the height of her argument she was interrupted by the appearance of old Nora under the arch. She motioned to her to be seated on the divan beside her, and then went on with her discourse. Finally, in a lull of the conversation, she turned to Mrs. Rudd, and said: "Something for me, is it?"

The old nurse handed a book to her; Mrs. Baltimore glanced at the title, and said:

"A new novel! That will be a delightful sensation during these days of summer imprisonment. Where did you find it? and who is the author? Why! it is an American book. Now, Sir Francis, I trust it is worthy your perusal. I shall satisfy myself on that point first. If it is not trash, I shall insist upon hearing your detailed criticism of it." She glanced over the title-page, and then said, in a puzzled tone, 'Oloff, the Dreamer; by Recluse.' Who is Recluse? I never heard that *nom de plume* before? Can you enlighten us, Nora?"

Mrs. Rudd, thus appealed to, replied: "You overwhelm me with questions, but I will endeavor to answer in the order of your propounding. I purchased the book in town, at Hollinbrook's. There is a great demand for it, the bookseller informed me. I first learned of the book from a friend. While I was looking over the array of new books, several persons came in and asked for it. The author, it appears, prefers to veil himself in obscurity at present. The name 'Recluse' is an entirely new one. An impression prevails, I know not why, that the author is an inhabitant of this county. Perhaps the accurate description of scenery about

here authorizes that supposition. I have read the book, and if I understand your sympathies and fancies correctly, you will be as unwilling to lay it aside as I was. I sat up nearly all night to finish it. It would be an excellent book to read aloud. Perhaps Sir Francis would be pleased to read a few chapters for the company. I think none of us will ever forget his admirable reading of Shakspeare last Monday."

"An excellent idea!" exclaimed Mrs. Baltimore; "add the weight of your vote, Mr. Delavan, to ours, and we shall surely be gratified."

"No! no!" exclaimed Sir Francis, "you all deem me prejudiced regarding your authors; and how do you conceive, then, that I should exert my best powers to render this mysterious unknown intelligible to you. I would not emphasize properly. I fear I would not suit your respective tastes. I would suggest, therefore, Mrs. Baltimore as the reader. What is your judgment, Mr. Delavan?"

"I agree with you, Sir Francis," replied the gentleman addressed. "I should enjoy immensely to hear you again in Shakspeare. But Mrs. Baltimore now—what say you, ladies, gentlemen, all?—shall Mrs. Baltimore guide us through this new realm of fiction? A new novel! a new novel!"

All the guests, save only the two who were seated under the statue of "Vigilance," came forward and requested the mistress of the house to favor them with her reading. The dilatory two, however, united their voices in favor of her from the distance. Thus urgently solicited, she opened the book and read aloud, accompanied by the musical tinkling of the fountain:

"DREAMS OF THE PAST."

"I have been seated here so long gazing into the limpid depths of this miniature lake, dreaming, dreaming, that I can no longer discern the distinctions of fancy and reality. Silent and dream-bound, nature has adopted me. The timid hare

has learned to circle round me in his careless play, nibbling the grass beside the lake. The golden-winged butterfly has made his capricious visits to my knee and hand. A graceful fawn from the wild-wood on my right passed me with his velvet tread, and paused upon the shore to wonder at his own image in the mirror of the lake. I could see them both, the gazelle-eyed watcher and his likeness in the water. The trees are drooping over the transparent flood, and in the depths another forest gently undulates, or silent dreams. Sweet mother Nature, thou hast adopted me into thy dreaming family and pressed me softly to thy tender heart. I have been alone, and thou hast taken me; the sceptre of thy silence rules my material shape, and my spirit, unfettered, fathoms the depths of the lake, and wanders through its immaterial forests. No dry and withered branch snaps startlingly beneath my tread, no impeding shrub brushes my side; but all is silent dreaming there. Those mirrored trees will sometimes wave and bend, but no whispering sound greets the material ear. I pass in silence beneath their spirit arches, and forget the Present and the Future. The Past lives, the Past whispers and thrills; and the bell-notes of memory lead me on, and still on. I have traversed the forest; its shadows are past; the blue sky of my childhood is arching my life; dear childhood, dear innocent heaven of mirth! The burden has fallen, the anguish is past; ambition has withered, I'm with you at last. From the green slope of the mountain the old school-bell is chiming, and the fleet brook is hurrying on to the sea. The graves have all vanished; those sad mounds have gone; and Willie and Charlie whistle shrill from the lawn—the lawn where we wrestled and ran the wild race. It was only fancy, those short narrow mounds enclosing the dead. They are all gone now. The smooth grassy meadow is unbroken by graves, and my boyish friends live again. The school is over; and Charlie, with his ruddy face, so animated under the torn hat, is leading us off towards the chestnut grove on the side of the mountain.

There the grey squirrels leap from branch to branch, and the ravine is so shady where we pause and drop the hook and line into the purling water. And now I see the beautiful face of Harry Winters, with his blue eyes and his curling hair. How charmingly he extemporizes fairy tales, and gestures to us boys gathered around him! It was a fable, that death seized him, and gave him that marble whiteness and that stern, rigid look. And here is Belle Somers, the little fairy. How earnestly we voted that she should be "Queen of the May," and how we succeeded, and crowned her with flowers. She is so pretty with her curls of gold, and her snow-white neck! How could I fancy she was passed away to Heaven? No! no! They all live, and their merry laughter echoes on every side. Oh! such reckless boys; I would not, "if" I was them, venture so far out on the branch. The tree is very rotten, and the bird is not so red as the one that builds in the willow by the pond. But Willie, he is not afraid of anything. He never was. I knew mother would come out if she heard how high Willie had climbed in *that* tree. How earnest her blue eyes are—how anxious she looks! Willie will have to come down without the nest, that's sure. Mother is very timid about us all climbing. She wants us all to go with her to select a bouquet in the garden. Alice Pinkney is going to be married, and these flowers are for the wedding supper. Frank Willis says it's girl's work, and he'd rather not do it. He wants to go out gunning to-day. Hark! the school-bell is ringing—"Who'll be there first?" The music of the old bell is dying away. Fainter and fainter it trembles on the air. Now the strokes of the bell are heard no longer. Only the air trembles after the last stroke. Fainter and fainter still comes the vibration. And now it is entirely gone. Alas! the school-house, and the maples, and the boys are all gone, and I am a man struggling and alone with my gasping heart, that craves companionship and the love of my kind.

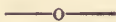
"See! the sunbeams are flooding through the forest. They tip the leaves of the beeches with gold, and fall through the

dense foliage of the pines in threads of light ; and now they reach my forest in the lake. They penetrate its shadowy arches, and quiver along its dim aisles. Something is waving to me far, far down in the depths of the lake. Can it be a hand? Yes! a fair beautiful hand gracefully beckoning to me. And now she raises it and brushes back her veil, and reveals those eyes which have ever loved and trusted me. The same old look of confidence, the same smile she wore on her engagement-day, when she turned to her betrothed, and pointing to me, said : " I love him almost as much for a friend as I do you for a lover." With her keen bright look she summons me to her side, to whisper some of her sparkling un. She shall sing for me again when the guests are all gone, and our little party of old friends are left to ourselves. What a delusion that *she* left me alone to die when cruel fate smote me with his iron hand, and the bright and beautiful of my life went out in a gasp of mortal agony ! What a delusion, that *she* passed me on the street with the cold look of a stranger—she who could *never* change! How blind, how wilful I have been to fancy this, when there she stands—imperial in her fun and wit—and beckoning so familiarly to me, her old friend, to come to her! Oh! the beautiful Past is the Present once more, and constancy reigns on the earth. Draw out the harp from its curtained retreat, and sing me our favorite song. I revel in those sounds of melody ; those cadences linger when you are away, and now I am happy once more. How strange that your eyes are growing so dim, and your voice is fading away in the distance ! Will you leave me abruptly ? Ah ! 'the harp is waiting so sadly under my forest trees in the lake. You have left me alone to murmur and die. I could have died for your sake, Mary, my friend ; and you wrong the impulses of justice, when you forsake me, too. Farewell ! alas, farewell ! I bless you as you flee, hurried off by the world, by pride, from one who trusted your sincerity and truth as he trusted the rising of the sun after the darkest night. Wail on, O

harp, for ever—though your notes dim my eyes with tears, and I can see no more the white hand waving to me from my forest in the lake! The sweetest dream I have ever known—the dream of a woman's friendship and trust—has vanished like the morning mist; and I sit lonely and deserted by the lake where the song of friendship was once sung, and kindred souls communed of the true and the beautiful!”

The reader was interrupted by a sob near her. She glanced up from her book. Mary Delavan had buried her face in her handkerchief and was weeping. The next instant, as if ashamed of this public manifestation of feeling, she arose abruptly and left the room. Mrs. Rudd followed her. Good taste assumed that the tears arose from excess of sympathy at the reading. If not, old Nora would be a sufficient escort, if it proved to be illness. Mrs. Baltimore went on with the reading, in which every one had become interested, save the two who were too remote on the divan by the statue of “Vigilance.” Nicholas Traver and his companion were too much engrossed in each other's society to join the attentive and silent group about the mistress of the house. They were partially hidden from the rest of the guests by the intervening fountain. But Nora had them in full view from her seat, and they felt relieved when she followed Mary Delavan out. Miss Angier's color was evidently heightened by the subject of conversation; and Nora, who saw everything, had not failed to observe it. When he discovered that he was no longer under the surveillance of those piercing eyes, the father of Mrs. Baltimore renewed the conversation with greater earnestness, and gave potency to his remarks by more frequent glances into his companion's face of his irresistible eyes of blue. Gifted with the insight and discretion of an angel, was the woman who could gaze long into those eyes and remain unmoved, unfascinated. Miss Angier, with all her sense, was evidently not proof against their influence.

That superb elegant talker and thinker, bore in his beautiful features the evidences—which most men deem satisfactory—of an earnest, truthful nature. It was far from strange, then, that the girl, in the presence of the mature and accomplished scholar, the brilliant wit, the object of universal admiration, should open the secret portals of her heart's treasures at the touch of his wizard hand. The narrative of his lonely history for many years gradually and naturally melted away into a tale of love; and while the reading engrossed the attention of the guests, and the vigilant Nora was absent, that tale was surely and fatally threatening the brightness and purity of a star, and there was no one to sound for the poor bewildered girl a note of alarm.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE emotion of Miss Delavan, which had occasioned in some minds conjectures regarding the possibility of the unknown author being an acquaintance of hers, gave increased zest to the subsequent pages by "Recluse."

Rogers, who had been so abruptly deprived of his sitter, laid aside his palette and brushes, and listened attentively to

"'DREAMS OF THE PRESENT.'

"'From my exalted seat on this spur of the mountain, my eye ranges over a wilderness of foliage bisected by an ancient blade of glistening steel, the river. This trenchant weapon in the grasp of Omnipotence, has cloven the rocks and the mountains, and enabled civilization to glide in and lay its beneficent hand upon the solemn and gloomy heart of the proud recluse, the wilderness. Like every conqueror, the noble river has its satellites of rank and beauty. The stately mountains, in their robes of emerald, stand sentinel about its path, or in autumnal days of solemn state don scarlet and

golden mantles to honor the passing monarch. The musicians, the tributary cascades, in snowy garments sing to their lord, and the countless orchestras of birds warble in unison along his path. The Storm King sends forth his heralds, the echoes, to repeat his thunder-tones of praise, and the sky marshals her maids and matrons of snowy white, and purple and gold, to look upon the conqueror as he passes towards the sea, or in the evening spreads above him her canopy of flaming meteors and silver stars. Far below me, on the river banks, where men hurry and pant, labor and die for gold, Oloff the dreamer is a stranger and an exile from human sympathy. The pearls of his heart are driven from the market-place, the tendrils of his affections are refused a climbing-place upon the trellis of society, and then he scales the dizzy crag to pour his pearls and flowers into the lap of Nature, that she may blend them with the wreaths she daily flings in tribute to the glory of the Hudson, the river of his young dreams and his mature love. Through its entire length, the noble stream is the recipient of homage. The monarchs of the forest bend reverently towards it; flowers droop to its flow; and even the adamantine rocks, cleft asunder in its march, are known to incline in grim reverence towards their master. The noiseless mist, the spirit-daughter of the river, rises from its bosom, glides with fairy tread up and around the summits of the highlands, and then floats upwards, amorously, to a marriage with the Sun, the god of day. Glorious old monarch! in my loneliness and my despair I turn to thee! I am one of thy children. My first breath was drawn upon thy banks; the first notes of music that sweetly startled my young soul, came stealing to me over thy waters, and the first moon that cast its silver arrows at the target of my heart, lovingly placed its miniature in thy bosom. Trample upon me, O world!--crush to the darkness of oblivion the sympathies, the aspirations, the yearnings of my nature; and I will only shake off the fetters of race, and go forth to communion with the grand and the beautiful.

The river calls to me by its resistless, its onward motion, "Press bravely on to the Eternal Sea." In the serene blue eye of heaven above me only love and pity beam. I dream, gazing long upon my companion, the river, and in its mirror discerning mountain peaks inverted, and sailing vessels keel to keel. I dream, gazing upwards to that eye of blue, or trace above the line of emerald tree-tops the snowy peaks, castles, and minarets, which ever change their shapes upon the border line of cloud-land. It is my realm, and in the conscious pride of undisputed empire I dream on. But see! the intruder comes. A pure white carrier-dove hovers between me and the sky, a fitting messenger of love from my snowy castles in the clouds—a peaceful invader to whom my heart offers welcome, and then dreams on. Did ever perfect silence reign upon the throne of the human heart? Did ever lovely dreams have full fruition? Lo! upon my dream a wild hawk of the mountain glens arose. Spreading his war-wings for destruction, he swept darkly between me and the sun. Cloud-land and dream-land were indeed invaded, and the hush of peace was gone. Surely, fatally, he swept in huge circles above his prey; and when at last he fell like the lightning upon the white messenger sent to my dreaming realm from the clouds, I closed my eyes in pain, and my dream vanished. I looked again! The war-bird was flying off with the murdered dove, and drops of blood were falling to the serene bosom of the river. And is this thy lesson, O Nature? The powerful and the evil alone must conquer. The innocent and the true must go under. The strong must fall upon the weak, and fidelity and constancy shall be no shield from destruction. While yet the sneer lingered upon my face, the silence of the day was startled. The sharp crack of a rifle rang from the mountain side, and the triumphant hawk fell dead into the thicket. The scene brightened. Retribution will come to the lawless, the useless, the scourges of the earth. Take heart then. Man was created to guard and protect the innocent, and avenge their fall. If true to his noble mission,

he may win a crown of honor on the earth, and secure the approbation of heaven. The beautiful, the pure, the innocent, the noble, will crowd to his feet to do him reverence. Tears of gratitude shall glisten about him; kind hands grasp him loving smiles greet him, angels guard him. Arise! Oloff, the dreamer. Thy visions of the Present are futile. Fate, cruel fate, walls up thy soul from the fruition and the charms of the Present. Wrap the mantle of integrity about thine unknown form, and walk fearlessly out to

“‘DREAMS OF THE FUTURE.’

“‘In the coming time, brave hearts and iron wills shall be the citadels around which the angels of God shall gather for battle. To defend these fortresses, the word of the King of kings is pledged. Be thou one—the foremost—the citadel from which the Christian banner of Truth waves proudly. Hurl back the hosts of Evil, of Error, of Self. Corruption advances with rapid stride. Guard the citadel; sally forth; strike it before its shadowy followers have formed the impenetrable phalanx. Strike it in the court-room, though the bench of judges tremble. Wrestle with it on the rostrum. Fling off its mantle, and expose its hideous features to the people. Among the plain, the simple, the unostentatious, integrity dwells in covert—mines of gold and precious pearls. Be thou the wizard-hand to develop it, fashion it, give it impetus, and hurl it against the foe. All men are not corrupt. No! no! That is only the whisper of the fiend of the hour to discourage the champions of Right. Delve deep among the masses for integrity. The diamond will come to thy hand; its companions, small and great, will appear. The cluster will increase upon thy labors and thy manly struggles. It will expand into a wreath, glistening and beautiful. Wipe off every stain, and bind it upon thy temples, and its brilliancy shall win the souls of the timid, and dazzle to blindness the evil who reign. Grapple with Luxury, grap-

ple with Power. Fight for the poor, the friendless, the oppressed. Deem not, because the intellectual and beautiful are ranged under the banner of corruption, that their hearts are not assailable. In many a soul, hidden under the influence of pomp and power, a memory lingers. There was a time when that memory was fresh and beautiful. It was the memory of a child. It recalled a day of anguish, when the eyes of a precious mother closed in death. The wandering little feet of the child went up and down—lost, lost. The star of love which had lighted every evening, was gone out. Instinctively, or from teaching, the child sought for it among the stars of heaven. It was a strange transition, that long gaze at the distant stars, when the child had only looked before as high as a mother's beaming eyes of love. The innocent heart was seeking for the purity and love which had gladdened its little life, and which was lost. And lo! the anxious gaze was turned at last to the home, the source of all purity and love. Speak to that memory of that youthful time. Speak to that purity and innocence of thought and purpose, when the bare suggestion of evil was as awful as the gathering thunder-clouds, and you shall see the strong man melt in tears, and the woman's lip tremble in agony. Arise, Oloffe! girt with the freshness and the power of the morning, and walk forth side by side with the sun, to cheer, and invigorate, and bless! The mission of the intellect is to win power—power to sustain the weak and stimulate the strong, to wipe away the tears of life, and cause a lull in the storm of passions, that men may hear the music of heaven. See yon eagle perched upon the topmost fringe of the dark pine, surveying his empire, the river-valley, and the sea of foliage. He is not satisfied to share the kingdom with the grovelling sons of men. With a scream of exultation, he launches forth upon the blue ether, and mounts upwards towards the sun. Follow his flight till the eye is dazzled, and his career is lost. That eagle daring, and that upward flight, is the symbol of the soul. To that unexplored realm, each angel, poised

upon the pinnacles of human pride and human ambition, points and whispers : " Rise to the higher destiny of man." The foot-stand of these angels satisfies the most of men ; but in the unfathomed purposes of God, a soul will sometimes spurn the pinnacles of earth, and follow the eagle into the sun. Arise ! Oloffe ! The benefactor and the protector of those for whom Christ died ; who, in the name of humanity, is willing to bear and suffer all—is the eagle aiming his flight towards heaven. Arise ! Shake off the dreams of the Past and the Present, and in the dreams of the Future envelop thyself, secure of power and homage, and Heaven, if only thou recognise the sovereignty of Right and Humanity in the battles of Time.' "

The reader paused and looked up from the book. " How do-you all like it ? Shall I go on ; or are you tired ? "

The auditors expressed themselves in favor of further examination of the author's opening pages. Even Sir Francis Cleveland indicated his curiosity to ascertain what kind of a plot was to be founded upon the reveries of Oloffe. Upon his remarks arose a controversy as to the proper method of introducing characters into a novel, and the subsequent development of the plot. In the midst of the discussion old Nora entered the saloon, and after announcing that the sister of Mr. Delavan was not ill, and had, upon retiring to her room, requested to be left entirely alone, she produced a note addressed to the mistress of " The Glen," and stated that the bearer was awaiting an answer outside. Mrs. Baltimore broke the seal and glanced over the contents. It was a puzzling missive, and after a minute's reflection she said :

" Here is something you all must hear. It is mysterious, and therefore I claim the assistance of every one who is good at making correct surmises. See what mystification such an excellent gentleman as the Reverend Charles Heron can be guilty of."

The note read as follows :

"MY DEAR MRS. BALTIMORE:—A surprise awaits you, and the duty of giving you notification has devolved upon me. I trust my acquaintance with your family for many years will be a sufficient guarantee that no breach of refinement or good taste will be effected in regard to any surprise to which I may direct your notice. At a point on the highway, just half the distance from your estate to the town, you will recollect there is a maple grove covering the rising ground, which has for many years been familiarly known as 'Wizard's Hill.' At that point I earnestly desire to meet you at four o'clock this evening. The desired interview will not detain you beyond a half-hour. I am aware of the fact that you often ride in the evening in that neighborhood, hence I suggest it as a convenient place to meet you. Will you honor me by your presence (attended or alone, as you may deem advisable) at that hour?

"Your sincere friend,

"CHARLES HERON."

The reading of this amazing proposition was followed by a storm of comments and jests from the assembled guests.

"Meet him!" exclaimed Sir Francis. "By the virtue of my knighthood, I demand of you, Mrs. Baltimore, to entrust the delivery of your answer to him to me. What can the man be dreaming of? The proper place to approach a lady is at her own door."

"He is a clergyman, Sir Francis," was the quiet reply; "and a gentleman in every sense of the word. What do you think of this, father?" she added, extending the note to Nicholas Traver, who had come forward with his companion to discover the cause of the general excitement. He glanced over the note, and then folded it carefully, and placing it in his daughter's hand, said:

"Meet him by all means, if you are able to do so. He is too considerate and kind a man to make unreasonable requests. No doubt the occasion is extraordinary, and

demands an extraordinary manner of approaching you. If you are indisposed, for any good reason, I will ride out to meet him myself. If the matter is susceptible of being conducted through an agency, I will be happy to be the agent. Provided you cannot go, I or any of your friends will meet him."

There was a quiet dignity of tone in this reply which appeared reasonable enough, and yet it seemed to annoy the Englishman. Conciliation was rarely consonant with his impetuous method of acting and forming conclusions. He bluntly expressed himself opposed to the propriety of any lady leaving her own home to meet a gentleman on the highway when he could come to her house so readily.

"But," replied Mr. Traver, with the same gentle courtesy of manner, "the reverend gentleman states that a surprise is intended. No doubt it is a pleasurable surprise. He scarcely could request a meeting at such a place for a mere matter of business; and my judgment is, that if any disagreeable communication is intended, he would have expressed himself more clearly."

"That is my opinion, too," said Hugh Winchester. "If I were in your place, Grace, I would go. The Church is seeking for grace. Pray don't let it remain longer without it."

"Hush! irreverence!" replied his niece, placing her hand kindly on his arm. He was her favorite kinsman. "If you will behave yourself, uncle Hugh, you may be my escort. I think I will go. Why will not all of you ride out this evening? There appears to be no limit in the invitation extended to me. I must confess to the weakness of curiosity in regard to this matter. I will invite all of you to follow us. Uncle Hugh rides with me in the phaeton. He shall drive the fast bays to-day. Whoever has curiosity to follow us in this mysterious expedition, let him speak, or remain for ever silent. Who rides to Wizard's Hill this evening with us? Uncle Hugh and I drive ahead to the hill. If there is no objection to the whole party coming up, I will wave my

handkerchief over the back of the carriage to you. Who'll go?"

The guests all expressed themselves favorable to her proposition. Mystery sweeps along in her train all ages and sexes. What could the clergyman's note mean? Was it a picnic surprise?

"I wish Mr. Heron would bring his *daughter* with him," said Reynolds Winchester to the artist's sister, with a marked tone of interest, which he knew would provoke inquiry among the female auditors.

"Why?" asked his niece, turning her large, brilliant eyes upon him.

"She is the beauty of the county," was the response.

"Ah! I remember her," said Mrs. Baltimore. "She was not beautiful at the age of eleven or twelve. But she wrote poetry which attracted attention. She was a blonde."

"She is beautiful now, however," replied her uncle. "You will all acknowledge it when you see her—an exquisite creature—lovely in every way. If all the divine sex were as devoid of art and selfishness as Marie Heron, there would be no need of a hereafter; the world would be a heaven."

"Now, I know you are at mischief," said his niece, with a smile. "Had your language been more moderate, we should have been deceived. But now you are foiled. We are not even curious; we are all jealousy-proof!"

"Wait and see," was the confident response.

"That answer of yours postpones a decision to some very indefinite period," said Mrs. Baltimore.

"Then, I dare you to invite Marie Heron here. Ask her to join our circle for a week or two. I will introduce her to you any day. If she doesn't create a hubbub in this house, then execute me as a false prophet!"

Mrs. Baltimore turned laughingly to her father.

"Shall I invite Miss Heron here to dazzle Uncle Reynolds into silence and good behavior? He does nothing but try to make game of us ladies the whole day long."

“By all means invite her, Grace. We are indebted to her for kindness to our dead. I told you all about that. She is very lovely in person and mind. There is a very favorable opportunity at this present time. Since the destruction of the Rector’s house by the fire, they are boarding until their new house is built. Their locality now is unpleasant for warm weather. Mr. Heron will probably not object to his daughter being pleasantly domiciled while he is in town superintending the construction of his new house.”

Why did she remain silent as the smile slowly vanished from her face, and seriousness reassumed his sceptre? Is it mere chance that we are sometimes impressed with the conviction that persons who are to meet us in the garb of strangers are destined to be mingled in our unpleasant experiences, and to stand in antagonism to our current of joy? Is it chance that a voice whispers suddenly, “Your coming acquaintance will not add to your cup of earthly bliss, but will inadvertently upset the chalice, and spill some of the ruby drops?” Hushed were the lips of the heiress of millions, and attentive her heart, as the muffled bell of apprehension boomed sullenly off in the future. Why should she fear? The emblems of power were gathered in her hands; such emblems as men toil and struggle long lives for, and seldom attain? Society, wealth, and the attractions of great beauty were subservient to her uses, her ambition, her hopes. Her intellect glistened with acquirements, and, in the respect of cultivated men and women, she stood high. She was young, and beautiful, and true. Any one could love her. As she stood there, peerless among the beautiful and the refined, there was not one guest of her house whose heart did not feel kindly, warmly towards her. Why, then, the whisper of apprehension? She did not know; and, like a woman of sense, she shook off the passing spell, and answered cheerfully and gaily, in the manner of her own generous heart:

“Well, then, ladies and gentlemen, I shall put it to vote. Whoever favors the introduction into our circle of a new

beauty, a great beauty, and a beauty who can make earth a heaven for Uncle Reynlds, will please hold up his right hand. One dissenting vote shall exclude his divinity."

The pride of every woman present had been appealed to by Mr. Winchester's suggestions of jealousy. The thing was impossible, absurd, and could have its origin only in a man's low standard of womanhood. Of course every lady raised her right hand, and every gentleman followed the example. That matter was decided; and Mrs. Baltimore sent word to the Rev. Charles Heron's messenger that the proposed interview would be accepted at the appointed hour. Lunch was soon after announced, and its discussion superseded every other.

The servants appeared with a number of small tables, the legs of which were formed of white coral branches and the tops of white marble. Placing one of these delicate tables beside each guest, they retired for the lunch. In a few minutes they reappeared with the ancient solid silver salvers of the Baltimore family, laden with ices of every form and color; delicate breads; meats, tempting by their thinness, and the coolness of the crystal plates upon which they were arranged; cakes, delicate and puffy; preserves, glistening through their glass receptacles, like rubies and garnets; silver-frosted crystal pitchers of tiny size, full of rich cream; silver baskets of grapes gathered in every clime, and fruits from the tropics and the cooler latitudes clustered in defiance of the laws of climate;—decanters of wines, and glasses of delicate colors and patterns, fashioned in semblances of lilies and shells, stood near the fountains ready in coolers. Everything that could tempt the palate in the sultry days of summer was provided with lavish expenditure; and the guests idled away, in luxury and mirth, the hours which intervened before the expected ride to Wizard's Hill.

CHAPTER XX.

THE spirited bays ceased their rapid pace at the foot of Wizard's Hill and commenced to walk slowly up. The grateful shade of the maple-trees was already flung across their glistening coats, and they were allowed to choose their own pace in the ascent. The hill was destitute of undergrowth, and the eye could range for a great distance over the grass which carpeted the place. The road was straight before the horses' heads, leading with an easy ascent to the apex of the hill, where it appeared to launch forth into the blue sky. At the summit, however, the road in fact fell suddenly the other way to the plain. Hugh Winchester examined his watch, and then turning to the lady who occupied the phaeton with him, said :

"We are punctual, almost to the minute. It is only three minutes to four o'clock. Now let's see what is to be the upshot of this strange affair. Do you see anything in the shape of humanity on this hill? It's a lovely natural grove, but it looks deserted. Ah! do you see that? just at the summit, where the road seems to meet the sky, that's a man, sure, and something in his hand glistens in the sunlight. Hark!"

The clear silvery notes of a bugle burst upon the silence of the place. The startling call waxed louder and louder, ringing away over the tree-tops, and the echoes from the cliffs of the river came back in wonderful distinctness. The music ceased, and the man disappeared from the road at the summit. Silence reigned once more. The occupants of the phaeton looked at each other in astonishment. The sunlight blended with the shadows of the maples on the road before them. The horses toiled slowly up the ascent, but no other sound broke the stillness. The sole evidence of human life in their way had vanished.

Mrs. Baltimore, rising from her seat, looked back over

the way they had come. No glimpse of her followers rewarded her gaze. Her fast bays had outstripped her friends. She resumed her seat, saying:

"Mystery of mysteries. Invited to meet a clergyman, and finding only a signal of war. Uncle Hugh, where are your wits? you look as if the old wizard of the place had you spell-bound."

"By Jove!" exclaimed her companion, "there is something queer about all this; it sounds like a robber chief's signal to make ready for us. Suppose Mr. Heron didn't write the note, and it's all a plan to inveigle us here and rob us?"

"Would you show fight, Uncle Hugh?" she asked, glancing at him, as if the idea of a rencounter was the acme of delight.

"See here, my sweet niece; I suggested that idea to alarm you—not to gratify you; your eyes look perfectly complacent, just as if you relished the idea of meeting some villainous scamps in this lonely place. You have forgotten that a man was recently murdered not far from this hill."

"Nonsense, Uncle Hugh."

"I'm in earnest, Grace."

"You are? Well, you just jump out and run back and tell the rest of the party. As for myself, I intend to fulfil the engagement I started out for. Give me the reins. By the way, when you meet Sir Francis Cleveland, tell him to hurry up. He has been giving me glorious descriptions of an affair he had with brigands in Spain. I know he will relish this, particularly when you tell him there is a lady in the case. Hurry, now, for I shall probably have all the romance to myself."

She tried to take the reins from him. He colored up to think she should make such a proposition. The truth was, he had really known of a serious robbery in the neighborhood. During the whole time of the ride he had been cogitating the matter, and an apprehension of evil could not be shaken off. The mystery of the bugle-call made matters

worse. It would be far from unreasonable to suppose that his niece's well known wealth was a tempting inducement for lawless men to seek to obtain possession of her person. But when his apprehensions had taken the form of words, he was amazed to discover how quickly her innate fire flashed out to her usually serene exterior. He had heard of her efficiency on board the sinking vessel, but had always regarded it as exaggerated. Something in her eye and tone now informed him that it must have been literally true.

"Come, Uncle Hugh, don't stop to consider. Fight now, or go back for reinforcements while I drive on. Trust me with thieves—my darling bays will break through everything. Why don't you speak? What are you sitting there for, holding private council of war while our foes are combining against us?"

"Because you are so foolhardy. You know that I will fight where there's any sense in it. But I have no weapons. And that isn't the whole matter, either. I'm concerned about you. I came here to escort you, and take care of you, and I'm going to do it. The idea of your telling me to go back and leave you! You must be crazy."

"Well, come on, then," she said, with a bright laugh, at the same time giving the steeds a sharp cut with the whip. The horses dashed up the hill in sudden flight. Hugh Winchester soon tightened the reins upon them, and reduced them to order. He turned very red in the face with passion, but it passed away as quickly, and he said gaily before they reached the summit:

"Well! Grace, I'd be willing to take any chances with such a woman as you. I know now from which branch of your family you get your blood. Hurrah! now, for anything ahead. Listen to that—do you hear it? What in the deuce can that be doing out here! It must be a picnic party."

They were almost at the apex of the hill, but not a human being was in sight. Over the hill the enlivening

sounds of martial music were rising, approaching, flooding the forest, echoing back and forth from the near cliffs of the Hudson, and filling every listening heart with thrills of excitement and joy.

The phaeton reached the summit of the hill and paused. The grandeur of the scene upon the other slope burst upon the eyes of the riders. The onward tramp of thousands was heard upon the hillside, in the highway, and on the plain below. The whole community was aroused, eager, excited, pouring up through the grove, tramping forward to the sounds of thrilling music, and earnestly looking forwards and upwards. Soldiers in glittering trappings, with measured tread—horsemen flying back and forth under the maple-trees—vehicles of every pattern, from the elegant barouche to the clumsy country wagon, loaded down with men, women, and children—all, all pressing eagerly forwards and upwards to the music of the bands. And then the immense concourse of the people on foot, moving on with one soul and one heart to the presence of the beautiful being who had saved their town from destruction. They caught a glimpse of her on the summit of the hill, with her dancing steeds almost uncontrollable in the bursts of martial music; and with cries which deadened the beat of drums, they shouted to her, and cheer after cheer rolled away over the vast assemblage as they pressed on. Oh! the spontaneous, thrilling, outgushing gratitude of an exultant people to the brave woman who had saved them. She looked bewildered; a hazy mass of faces swam before her eyes, and timidly she shrank back in her seat, while her dark eyelashes drooped over those orbs, always modest and retiring, save in the face of imminent peril. Her uncle, with a tight hold upon his wild steeds, arose and waved his hat to the advancing crowds. They acknowledged the courtesy by shouts; and eagerly pressed forward, closing around the phaeton and seizing his horses by the bit, enabled him to soothe them to the sound of the rattling drums. As the people swept in hundreds around

the phaeton, eager for a glance into the countenance of Mrs. Baltimore, a poor woman pressed her way through the mass, and succeeded in reaching the front wheel of the vehicle. Lifting her child high in the air, she exclaimed: "Now take a good look at the sweet, brave lady. Ye may live a thousand years, and never look upon the like again. God bless ye, ma'am—don't be frightened, ma'am. We've only come to thank ye, for bein' such a splendid lady."

"Has any one seen the Reverend Charles Heron, here?" inquired Hugh Winchester, anxious to relieve his niece of the pressure from the crowd, which was packing more densely each instant about the phaeton.

"Yes, your honor, here he comes—he is close behind us. We all broke his order of march, when we ketched a sight of the lady."

"Make way, there," interrupted another voice of authority, as four snow-white steeds, with flowing manes and tails, made their appearance, prancing and bowing their heads to the sound of the music. They were attached to a triumphal car under whose white and silver canopy some object of great interest was evidently deposited. The crowd made way for it; and the white steeds pranced up to the side of the phaeton and there paused. The Reverend Charles Heron forced his horse slowly in through the crowd, and waving his hand to the foremost band of music, it ceased playing. The music in the distance also ceased; and the clergyman, dismounting, took his stand beside the triumphal car. The crowd was gradually hushed into silence. Removing his hat, and bowing to Mrs. Baltimore, he said:

"I come, in the name of these assembled thousands, to offer you a tribute of the heart. You did not forget the people in their hour of suffering and despair; and they are not going to forget you. You have established in their hearts a monument of gratitude, of which this outward token that I shall present to you is a feeble symbol. In that fearful night, when horror and destruction and death closed

in upon us, and there was no hand to succor, you interposed a slight form but a brave heart to the raging flames. The strong had fallen exhausted to the earth, the sense of the alert and skilful was confounded, and over your native town ruin brooded. Then, upon the scene, with a tender heart and angelic purpose, you burst like a whirlwind of God. Fearless, unyielding, patient, in the sharp sting of the fire, and cheering all on with accents which will never be forgotten while hearts beat and gratitude lingers upon earth, you battled with the wild element, and saved us. Your stand-point was our last hope; and without your interposition we should all be wanderers upon the earth—homeless, destitute, suffering. The poor, the friendless, the industrious, the honest, the widow, the orphan, the trembling child, all turn to you now with the benediction of the heart, and with the prayer that among the benefactors of humanity, God will remember you with special favor. They will remember you in the prayer of the evening, that no evil, no pain, no sorrow may fall upon your young life; that storms may be tempered in kindness to you; that the judgments of Heaven may pass you by; and that in the eternal home of the true and the good you may live for ever.

“I am deputed to present to you, in behalf of the people of your native town, this symbol and monument of the fire. Keep it as the pledge of hearts. Transmit it to your heirs as an encouragement to virtue, and self-sacrifice, and intrepidity. To its construction nearly every hand in the town has contributed. The widow’s mite and the rich man’s offering have commingled to buy it. I have seen the arm of the trembling invalid reach from the couch to drop an offering into the box, while lips murmured blessings upon your head. I have seen the innocent child reach on tip-toe to deposit her little memorial. There is but one voice, one sentiment, from the aged to the young; and that is, ‘May our preserver ever enjoy the richest blessings of God.’”

He ceased, and turning to the triumphal car drew aside the silken curtains, exposing the flashing memorial of the

people. It was a miniature town of solid silver, at least six feet square. Every street and lane was accurately defined, and along them drooped the elms and maples, with silver foliage exquisitely traced. The public buildings and the church-spires were in their appropriate localities and proportions. Over one side of the town swept the silvery flames—buildings tottering to their fall, and people rushing away to places of safety. Four unknown heroes were entering houses in their hideous disguise, and beneath their heroic likenesses were engraved the words—“*To be unveiled in Heaven.*” The white steed of Mrs. Baltimore was in the foreground, rearing his forefeet in terror at the flames. His rider was waving her handkerchief towards the court-house, and cheering the men on. Even the Englishman, Sir Francis Cleveland, was represented bravely toiling amid the firemen. The whole dreadful scene was renewed accurately in silver.

Mrs. Baltimore, too bewildered and excited to respond, whispered to her Uncle Hugh to answer for her. Mr. Winchester arose in the phaeton and gracefully returned thanks for the honor done her in the presentation of the elegant memorial. Thunders of applause followed his speech; and then, at the signal from the clergyman, the military bands struck up a triumphant march, moving off towards the town. The people slowly and reluctantly formed their returning line of march, cheering as they passed away down the slope of the hill, till the river-cliffs rang again and again with the wild echoes of their shouts and the measured responses of the bands. In a few moments they had passed away homeward, and the occupants of the phaeton were left alone with the white steeds of the memorial-car, and the two grooms with silver scarfs who were to lead them to “The Glen.” So absorbed had the young widow been by the surprise and excitement of the great meeting, that she had forgotten to wave back the expected signal to the remainder of her party, who had been directed to await it at the foot of the hill behind her. Hearing the bursts of martial music, but

too refined to violate her programme, her guests were congregated at the foot of Wizard's Hill in vehicles or mounted, awaiting her pleasure. Only Sir Francis, catching a glimpse of the crowd gathered about the phaeton, had presumed to ascend the hill after her. He arrived in time to see the multitude descending the slope, and beheld with amazement the canopy and its dancing steeds. Wheeling his horse to the side of the phaeton, he exclaimed :

"I have come unheralded and uninvited. By George ! I fancied you were reviewing an army, by the sounds I heard. What does all this mean ? A triumphal car which looks as if it might have come from the train of some chaste goddess ! And here is a silver mine—streets, houses, churches, people, flames—all done in silver. What a country ! What a people ! Pardon my intrusion, but the thing had a public look, so I ventured without your handkerchief-call. Am I excusable ?"

The lady addressed was fairly trembling with emotion. She controlled herself, however, and said, pointing to the memorial :

"That is a token of gratitude for the salvation of the town. You will find everybody delineated there ; you are there, too, Sir Francis. Go up and examine it, and see if you can detect your own likeness. It's a way we have in this country of preserving old family silver-plate. Don't look so astounded, but go and examine it. You know I told you yesterday not to be surprised at anything ; novelty is our national characteristic. Here, assist me to alight, and I will examine it with you."

The Englishman dismounted, and giving his bridle to one of the grooms of the car, returned to Mrs. Baltimore's assistance, after hailing the party at the foot of the hill and inviting them to ascend. He was amazed at the exceeding beauty and delicacy of the workmanship, when he came to examine the memorial closely. But when he recognised his own figure among the heroes of the fire, he could not conceal his

satisfaction. He was really there, and the realization of the personal compliment seemed to aid him materially in pronouncing upon the good taste and workmanship of the memorial.

"A really excellent specimen of mechanical skill. It bears unmistakable evidence of being done by an English workman; but, no doubt, some one domiciled in this country. A man, Mrs. Baltimore, must serve a thorough apprenticeship to work well in metals, or indeed in any art. You will find English manufacture always superior in the long run. There is no department of art in which you will not find the superior benefits of English regularity and apprenticeship. Every man in England is confined strictly to his own art, and in that results always superiority."

"How about the art of war, Sir Francis?" inquired Mrs. Baltimore, with a twinkle in her eyes, as she turned towards her uncle. "We had a seven years' struggle with your regulars who had served their time. Of what account were your apprentices of war?"

"Nonsense, Mrs. Baltimore; don't always be alluding to that. Everybody knows that war was an anomaly."

"Well, Sir Francis, that word anomaly will always be the American palladium of success. With us it signifies genius. The nations of the earth may monopolize regularity to their hearts' content. Anomaly in our hands will deal surprise-blows that will secure us a fair share of victories, either in trade or science or war. It's a peculiarity of our people, and we prosper under it. But there come the rest of the party; how stupid of me to forget the signal!"

Exclamations of delight arose from the new-comers. Congratulation and praise was the order of the day. After some discussion as to the proper locality at "The Glen" for the reception of the memorial, it was finally decided to place it as a permanent ornament in the centre of the round dining-table, which the taste of the original Baltimore had established under the dome of the mansion. The party then turned their horses' heads homewards, the triumphal car with

its snowy steeds taking the lead, and Sir Francis Cleveland and Nicholas Traver acting as its mounted escort. By the time the pageant had reached the porter's lodge of "The Glen," the sun had gathered his scarlet and golden ministers of state to his retiring couch, to hear his mandates ere he fell asleep. As the gay procession slowly approached the mansion under the ancient trees, the liveried servants and the maids congregated upon the great circle before the porch, in wonder at the mysterious car of state. They had heard the vague rumor of a surprise at the hour of lunch, and here it was, surely coming. When the excitement attending its arrival had subsided, and the silver town had been deposited under the dome, Mrs. Rudd, who had remained at home during the surprise-ride, appeared at a door of the dining-hall, and indicated that an arrival of interest had occurred during the young widow's absence. Leaving her guests lounging and chatting about the memorial, Mrs. Baltimore followed Nora to the front drawing-room, unobservant of the glances exchanged between the old nurse and the artist Rogers. It occurred to the mistress of the house that Nora's expression was triumphant or self-satisfied, as she summoned her away from her guests; but the significance of that look was destined to remain for a long time uninterpreted. Entering the drawing-room first, Nora drew aside the window curtains and allowed the fading light of day to fall upon a portrait on the wall. It was the lost picture of Gertrude Baltimore. It had been newly and elegantly framed, and a fresh look was the result of a recent coat of varnish delicately spread over the canvas. The singular velvet cap and tassels described by Weaver, the gardener, instantly attracted attention. There was no head-dress in the recollection of the young widow in any of her wanderings, so grotesque, and yet so effective and beautiful. There was a commanding look in the face of this Baltimore, unlike any of the other portraits in the room. There was a general resemblance to the other members of the family; but the eyes were different in shape and color

The Baltimore eye, common to all the portraits, was a piercing black. Gertrude Baltimore's eye was almond-shaped and grey. The lady who had been the cause of alienating the ancient estate from that family blood, stood silent and thoughtful a long time, gazing at the portrait. She possessed a constitutional reverence for anything old and venerable. Once, that face had ruled supreme in the household where now her own rule was established. That form had swept in authority through the halls of her ancestors; and tradition had coupled gentleness and power, pomp and charity, with the memory of that woman's soul. Would she be able to sustain the dignity of the estate which had fallen to her hands as firmly as the face which looked at her from the wall? Would her memory be precious in the thoughts of her present companions and guests? These reflections were dreaming in her brain as she stood silently contemplating the picture, or passed back and forth to new positions, to study effects of light and shade. Finally, she appeared to weary of this strange relic of the past, and turned to her companion for information. The portrait had been produced upon her intimating to Nora that she was aware of its existence, and wanted it. The old nurse had promptly answered all inquiries about its existence by saying that she recollected it, and would restore it to the parlor wall when it had been properly cleaned and its crumbling frame replaced. There was the picture, as she had promised, in its new frame. That picture which had cost her that hour of agony, that mental struggle, that secret theft. And yet she was as calm, as unmoved by its presence on the wall, as if her struggle had been only a dream. Had a change come over her pride, over her conscience, over her sensitiveness, that she stood thus imperturbably studying the young mistress as she gazed upon the picture. The inquiry from Mrs. Baltimore came startlingly:

“Did you know her, Nora?”

After a pause of a few seconds, in which she appeared to study mentally, she answered:

“Yes! I knew her well.”

The tone was hoarse, hollow-sounding. It caused the inquirer to start and look at the old nurse. She was contemplating the picture with a look in which the young widow fancied was blended an expression she had never seen in Nora's face—awe, apprehension.

“Was she reputed stern, cold?”

The question seemed to surprise the tall woman, who looked so dark and shadowy in the fading twilight. The glitter of her strange eyes appeared to soften at the question. She turned to a seat at the window, and motioned to her companion to sit beside her. Mrs. Baltimore joined her on the sofa, taking her aged hand, as was her wont, when they were alone together. She loved her old nurse with a more ardent affection than she did any relative on earth. She removed her riding-hat, and dropped it beside the sofa. Nora appeared to be dreaming of the past. She was silent for awhile, holding the little hand which had been placed so lovingly in her own. At last the old woman said, in a tone husky at first, but clear and musical as she warmed with interest in her subject:

“I will tell you about Gertrude Baltimore; and I assure you, Grace, it is a long time since I have spoken of her to any one. My lamp of life flickers feebly. The old woman cannot be spared much longer from eternity; and as my life totters to its grave, my old heart warms towards you. My child, I want to confide in and love you better than anything that lives. You have sweetened my bitter cup of life. You have been to me the angel of peace which sometimes precedes the angel of death. As I look upon you and your life day by day, and see how bravely and sweetly you try to do right amid the temptations and vanities of wealth and adulation which have fallen so lavishly upon you, I am praying all the time for God to assist you. I watch every motion you make, and hear almost every word you utter, when I am near. It is the yearning of my heart to guide you and warn

you of snares. It did seem at one time as if all the powers of darkness had conspired against your young life. But, thank God, that is past. And yet, even now, you are not quite happy. I can see, Grace, that you do not find that congeniality and sympathy in your father that you anticipated. He withdraws into himself when you are with him. He seems ill at ease in your companionship. This is not an uncommon experience to those who have had as many opportunities of studying families as I have; but let that remain in the hands of God. He purposes well for you in it; and no doubt you will find a love which shall fill your great heart and comfort you yet. Be brave in the desolation of the heart, and so will God reward you as you bear patiently. But I was going to tell you of Gertrude Baltimore. I trust her spirit hears and loves us at this minute in the court of heaven. You asked me if she was called a stern, cold woman. If ever a woman possessed a loving, tender heart, it was she. But she had strong feelings of family pride. She believed people's standard of acting and thinking was elevated by preserving family traditions and family consequence. She was intensely opposed to any of her blood marrying "beneath them," as the phrase of society goes. She was a woman of rare talent. Everything that related to the great and the influential in history at once enlisted her sympathy and attention. She idolized great characters and distinguished houses; and she was partial to such works as treated of women of royal blood who maintained the dignity of their positions under severe ordeals. She was the patroness of genius in every department, and her portfolio was rich in letters from men of worth. Of course I speak now with the understanding of a girl. I give the impressions of a young female mind at an age when allowances must be made for enthusiasm, and the estimate of character is not tinctured by prejudices, religious or conventional. An act of deceit, an approach even to dishonor in one of her blood, caused such revulsion of feeling that she would isolate herself for days,

and even weeks, from the offender. She felt it as a personal disgrace, and only time could eradicate her resentment. But pride for her kin was blended ever with affection. She would make personal sacrifices for them with as little apparent reluctance as she received favors from them. It was the consciousness of her exalted character that made hostility from her so painful to her friends. Her ripe judgment almost invariably vindicated itself in the long run, and her predictions of character were always verified. She was the occasion, it is said, of saving large wealth to her family by her management in an important lawsuit. In the height of family prejudice and legal excitement, she insisted upon a compromise being effected. She saved half of her immense claim. Persistency in the suit would have lost all. Her toilet was almost severe in its simplicity; but she would wear none but the most expensive velvets and laces. She used to say that hospitality was the mark of a great soul. She despised accumulation of wealth for its own sake, and always employed it for the happiness of others. In times of financial panic, when even the liberal draw tightly on their purse-strings, she was wont to say, 'The great day for God's poor has come; who giveth freely in the hour of general calamity and panic, giveth with difficulty, and that is charity.' I could tell you of many independent acts she did in the Church, but I would only tire you. She was a strong character, and once her name was in every mouth; but I find as we grow old, the idols of our young days are forgotten."

"Did you live near this property, in those days?" inquired Mrs. Baltimore.

The darkness had gathered too densely in the apartment for Nora's countenance to be seen, else the inquirer would have detected uneasiness in those aged features as she studied her reply. At length she answered:

"I have passed weeks and even months under this roof with Gertrude Baltimore. I have been speaking from my knowledge derived during intimate acquaintance with the family."

"Then you must have known my husband in his early life."

"Oh! yes," was the calm response; "I knew him well. It was my knowledge of his character that induced me on that fatal night to seek to prevent the marriage. But it was too late."

"Was he in early life so intensely selfish?"

"The same hard, inexorable self-seeker; the same vindictive nature. Triumph or revenge was ever his motto," was Nora's reply.

The young widow remained thoughtful and silent, holding the aged hand. When she spoke, her companion was startled at the echo of her own secret thoughts.

"Nora, I don't like my father's attentions to Kate. Their natures are discordant, and she is too young for him. Yet it is the first approach to a real attachment on her part I have ever seen."

"Would you like to have those attentions end?" was the earnest inquiry from the old nurse.

"Why, Nora? Why do you ask in that tone?"

"I can part them wider than the sea."

"I know you are almost a miracle-worker, my dear nurse, but such affairs defy bars and bolts."

"I have a sceptre, omnipotent for this purpose. Give me authority to use it in your house, and the matter shall end where it is."

"Is it a secret, Nora?"

"It is."

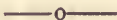
"My dear old nurse, I trust you; trust your judgment; trust you in everything. If you will break off this intimacy, no tongue can tell you my gratitude."

"Leave everything to me, then; and in a few days your wish and my wish shall be accomplished."

"I shall study you and your management. I don't believe, Nora, in your reputed supernatural power. Good-by, my darling old witch; there is the summons to our late dinner."

She rushed away up-stairs with her bonnet in hand, and left Nora pacing the floor in the darkness, and muttering to herself:

“By the power Heaven has given me, it *shall* end—if pride is left in woman’s heart! But pride—aye! pride sometimes is trampled out by love.”



CHAPTER XXI.

THE moon in full splendor lighted the shrubbery of the garden as two females passed slowly along the walk in earnest converse. They spoke in subdued tones, as the night was lovely, and other guests might be seated under the arbors enjoying the cool air after the feverish day. As they penetrated further into the shadowy wood which bordered the glen, and left the flower-beds of the garden behind them, they raised their voices and spoke without restraint. Allured by the beauty of the scene, they held on their way until they had passed the rustic bridge, and entered the wilds beyond the brook. Continuing on, they reached the basin in the side of the cliff, where the antique drinking-cup stood. The unveiled power of the moon silvered the water in the basin, and as the two paused to watch the play of the fluid, as it leaped from the cliff in diamond sparks, and then circled around its stone receptacle, their figures were clearly revealed in the moonlight. They could be seen by any one approaching from either direction on the path, and abundance of time would be given them to change the current of their discourse, in the event of any intruder appearing. The younger of the two raised the iron cup and studied its strange workmanship, but her thoughts were dwelling on other subjects. She was evidently embarrassed, for she bit her lip several

times, and then looked long and earnestly into the basin. She knew that dark eyes were eagerly regarding her, and she could not look up at them. They were keen eyes, readers of thought often. And she knew that fact from experience. At last, after an inward struggle of several minutes, during which both remained silent, Miss Angier said, in accents of extreme sadness :

“It seems as if all that is earnest and truthful in my life—all that is good—is destined to be trampled under foot. Nothing in me meets with encouragement and assistance but the evil. Frivolity, fashion, all the impulses of a butterfly-nature, are readily gratified ; their requirements fly to my hand, while the demands of a true womanhood go begging. I must have some position in life assigned me by God. I must have been intended to fulfil some mission. What is it? I feel that I can make somebody a good wife. I am conscious of ability to assume duties in life, and fulfil them completely. And here, after a wandering, purposeless life, I find a being congenial, sympathetic with my tastes. One who meets, or appears to meet, all the requirements of my nature. He offers me marriage. There is everything in his possession to make me happy, and just in the midst of it all, you start up before me like a statue of warning, and bid me shun him. It is only respect for your character that suffers me to listen to you. You have shown me repeated kindness. I cannot question your sincerity. Mrs. Baltimore’s commendation of you confirms my own judgment. And yet your advice dashes to the earth all the precious contents of my little cup of hope and joy. You have sent through my dreams of happiness a shudder. You bid me distrust him, and your marvellous possession of our secrets—secrets whispered to each other when no human ear was near—gives you the occasion to converse with me of my heart-treasures. Oh! I have the right to demand all your sources of information, of slander against him. He appears so pure, so noble, so generous. You must bring to me proofs, not bare asser-

tions against his character. I demand this as the right of a woman's heart. I do believe that I act from principle. My ideas of a future life, of religion, may not coincide with yours, but I am nevertheless earnest in my convictions of morality. If you will prove, absolutely prove to me his treachery towards women, I will give up this ride to his estate. I will withdraw myself from his influence. Tell me, did he betray to you that his miniature was hidden in my bosom?"

"No, never," was the frank response. "I believe he would not betray a secret between himself and a woman. He is too crafty and far-seeing for that."

"Then you give him no credit for honor. He does not, in your opinion, act from honorable principle, but only from craft."

"That is precisely my estimate," was the cool reply.

"And you think he will not marry me, after his solemn promise?"

"What is a promise from a man who regards not the sovereignty of God?" was the solemn response.

"And you will not tell me how you knew of the miniature and our engagement?"

"Only on the conditions I have stated," was the firm reply of the reputed prophetess.

Miss Angier looked long and seriously into the rock basin. Her faith in the man she loved began to waver. She did not believe in the supernatural, and without its assistance it was impossible to account for Nora's knowledge of the miniature, unless upon the supposition that Nicholas Traver had in some way violated his promise of secrecy. Nora had even detailed to her the conversation in which he had declared his love to her, and given her his likeness. After a time, she looked up earnestly at her tall, silent companion. If she was gifted with supernatural power and insight, as many contended, then there was sufficient explanation of that remarkable brilliancy of the eyes which were regarding her, searching her mind, piercing into her very soul—those terrible

eyes. Miss Angier instantly averted her gaze. It seemed like lifting up the mirror of her heart for Nora to study. What should the bewildered girl do? It would never answer the requirements of sense to go on blindly now, and continue her intimacy with that man after such a fearful warning. Her all was staked upon this game of life—of marriage—of hope. Should she seek explanation from his insinuating lips? Nora had warned her of the serpent tongue, and its persuasive powers. She studied long—she studied well. Raising her eyes to the prophetess, she said:

“Tell me how you learned of the miniature being in my possession. Convince me that he whispers in another woman’s ear the love which he declares to be mine alone, and I will carry out your conditions, and fling his attentions to the winds with contempt.”

“I knew you had character; I knew you were a true woman, else I should not have ventured to approach you,” exclaimed Nora, her eyes beaming with triumph. “You are saved, Miss Angier; and some day you will bless my poor old memory. But you must fulfil my conditions first. In observing them, the facts will come to you. The knowledge you demand, and my conditions, are probably directly in your way; this very night I intend to intrust a secret to you within the hour. Will you keep it inviolate? Will you go with me; and when you have learned the secret of my power over you to-night, will you keep it sacredly, and act as conscience and reason demand hereafter in regard to it?”

“Mrs. Rudd, I will.”

“Then await my return here. I am going to the house. If I am detained unexpectedly, still be patient and wait for me. I am going to reconnoitre. I will either return for you myself or send a messenger to you. Be patient and trust me, for I am your friend, and the friend of all the innocent.”

The old nurse took the hand of the white-robed girl, pressed it warmly to her lips, and then turned away towards the distant mansion. She passed away in the moon-

light, and after a few seconds, her dark figure vanished behind the trees which intervened between the rock basin and the bridge of unhewn oaks. All was silent now, and the expectant watcher looked up seriously to the chaste goddess of the night. Hushed were the dense tops of the pines where the silvery flood lingered. The moss on the rocks revealed each green fibre in the broad glare. Only the sound of the trickling water was heard, as it dashed into the basin in silver threads, or sparkled downwards in diamond drops. The maiden pondered the inscription on the cup in her hand. "ΕΞΟΡΤΟ"—"*I ardently desire.*" Yes; in the buried city of past ages, parched lips and anxious hearts had gathered to the fountains to slake their thirst. The good God had given His creatures drink. Was He not able to give to her, the maiden, a cup of love—pure, crystal water—from the fountain of a sincere heart; from a manly heart, capable of appreciating the delicate and refined devotion of a woman? But would He, the kind Creator, send her love, or was He about to dash aside the love she craved, and on its frightful ruin establish only solitude and despair? Laying the iron cup on the basin, she drew from her bosom the miniature. Who dared pronounce that exquisite semblance of manly beauty false—a libertine? She gazed long upon the Adonis face, and its outlines recalled the love which Nora had declared should pass away like the whirlwind. How little could the old woman realize the intensity of confidence which love entails in a girl's heart. "No! no!" she murmured, as she looked upon the likeness, holding it up to the moon. "He bears upon his exterior the marks of inward purity and truth. I will obey Mrs. Rudd, because I have promised. I will follow her to-night, only to find confirmation of his innocence and love for me. Truth reigns yet on the earth, and he is its symbol." She hastily replaced the likeness in her bosom, for she fancied some one was crossing the bridge of oaks. It was a false alarm. No footsteps were near. Then she paced slowly back and forth along the path, her shadow her

only companion in the evening silence. She imagined she must have walked back and forth for nearly a half-hour. The place where she was waiting had slowly passed into shadow as the moon moved on. Still Nora did not appear. She grew impatient, uneasy. She did not fancy the idea of remaining so far from the house, and alone. Finally, weary of the long delay, she walked slowly on towards the bridge. She passed into the dark shadows of the interlacing pines. She paused and listened for a few moments. No one was coming, evidently. She moved on further towards the bridge, and found the darkness more gloomy still. She passed on again, till she reached the bank of the stream. The view here was more cheerful. The moonbeams lighted the eddying water, and she walked upon the bridge to look at it. She leaned her white figure over the oaken rail, and stood for a long time watching the water as it moved in a dark sullen stream out from the shadows of the overhanging pines, and then suddenly was transformed to a sheet of silver. Just under the bridge it passed over a pebbly bed in ripples of silver. She could see it through the openings between the rude oak timbers which made the floor. Thus, she thought, flowed the stream of life—dark, then smooth and beautiful in the light of joy! then broken and shattered, and passing from view. She was aroused by the breaking of a twig. She looked up; a dark figure was moving between the trees on the bank. It must be the old nurse. The figure advanced rapidly—too rapidly for comfort on the warm evening. Her conjecture was correct. It was Nora, walking rapidly for one of her years. She uttered an exclamation of caution as she discovered the watcher so far advanced on her way homeward.

“Be careful; pass into the shade on this side. Some one is coming behind me, and I don’t want to be seen by any one just now.”

Miss Angier obeyed the direction, and drew herself into the thicket beside Nora. They were effectually concealed.

In a few seconds, a gentleman and lady passed along the path, and crossed the bridge with a slow step. The hidden couple recognised them as Charles Delavan and Mrs. Baltimore. When they had gone on towards the rock-basin, earnestly conversing on some foreign topic, the hidden companions emerged from the thicket, and, taking a circuitous route to avoid other strollers, reached the gardens at a point quite near the rear of the new additions to the house. Here Miss Angier remained concealed under an arbor of grapevines until Nora could reconnoitre again. The object was to glide into the hall which connected the old and new buildings without being seen by other inmates of the house, or by any of the guests who might be wandering about in the moonlight. Nora returned to the arbor, and reported the coast to be clear. The two then passed along in the full glare of the moon, and, entering the connecting-hall, closed the door quietly behind them. The moonbeams flooded the hall through the side-windows. No one appeared to be stirring in the immediate neighborhood; and, after a brief pause, the old nurse whispered:

"Move quickly in before me. We are going to pass through a secret door. Here your promise of secrecy commences; come fearlessly on. I know every inch of the way."

Placing her hands against a panel of the wainscot which lined the wall, a door swung inwards, and a gloomy aperture was visible in the moonlight. Taking Miss Angier by the arm, she gently urged her forward into the darkness, and entering after her, closed the secret door behind them. Then she directed the young lady to place her right hand upon the wall of the concealed tunnel and walk on as fast as she conveniently could, assuring her that there were no obstacles in her way. Miss Angier, in amazement, put out her hand, and discovered that the wall was covered with some soft material like baize. The floor of the tunnel was carpeted with the same material. Nora encouraged her in

the darkness, and thus stimulated and curious, she passed on, feeling her way by the wall. When her feet at length came in contact with a woollen obstruction on the floor; of which her companion had warned her, Miss Angier paused, and waited for further instructions how to proceed in this unknown way. She was then informed of a rise in the floor—a gentle, easy rise—which she must ascend carefully and slowly, avoiding conversation. At the termination of this rise she was to meet a cord secured to the side-wall. By the aid of this hempen bannister she would ascend two steps, and then must remain silent and attentive in the darkness. Nora promised to follow her closely, and take her hand when she had reached the topmost of the two steps. She was assured that she would learn a secret during that attentive silence which would serve her a good purpose in life. Awestruck, the young lady moved on in the impenetrable gloom, with no conception of her whereabouts, and no idea of the result of this apparently subterranean journey. She felt only that she was in the power of a strange being, reputed to be gifted with supernatural vision, and urging her forward to some terrible revelation in life. She had given her promise of secrecy, and nothing remained but to push on to the dreadful reality ahead in the gloom.

Miss Angier was not devoid of fortitude and spirit, and resolutely she groped her way on. Ascending the rise ahead of her, she reached the foot of the steps and put out her hand for the bannister. It met her groping hand, and by its assistance she arose almost perpendicularly upwards on the two steps. Pausing with beating heart, she heard voices, and felt a current of cool air circulating about her head. All, however, was dark as the ancient blackness of Egypt. Hush! the music of a voice which had often thrilled her heart was distinctly audible. The tones were the loving accents which she had dreamed were never assumed but for her ear alone. Aye! more; they were tones which denied the power of her own fascinations, and vowed by the bright and holy stars of

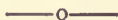
heaven, that the love of Nicholas Traver had been bestowed, and for ever, upon the sister of the artist Rogers. The listening girl heard distinctly Lucretia Rogers avow her joy at the confession and promise to be the wife of Nicholas Traver. She turned as cold as the marble statue of Vigilance in whose covered pedestal she stood concealed. Nora felt her hand turn cold in her grasp, as she extended her arm upwards to sustain her. She feared the poor girl would faint and fall. She miscalculated the endurance of that betrayed woman's heart. Miss Angier remained silent and listening, till enough was learned to satisfy incredulity of the man's utter falsity. She heard him declare that he had passed so much of his time in her society in order to divert attention from his real love for the artist's sister. She heard him denounce herself as trivial, worldly, and unworthy of a serious affection. Her bright dream had a fearful awakening, and when she descended at length noiselessly to Nora's side, she pressed both arms around the old woman's neck, and laid her head in confidence and gratitude upon her bosom. It was more effective than a dangerous whisper under the statue of Vigilance, and expressed to the old nurse's heart the acknowledgment: "You have saved me from a fate worse than death."

Softly, silently they stole away in the darkness from the statue which looked sternly upon deceit and treachery, and when they reached the secret door, and emerged unobserved into the hall, Miss Angier whispered freely to the old nurse her gratitude that the great snare of her life had been severed by her hand, and she was enabled to emerge once more into the open air of an innocent existence.

The mystery of the miniature was explained to her. When Mary Delavan retired from the saloon so abruptly during the reading of the novel by "Recluse," Nora had followed her in solicitude to her room. Ascertaining that she was not ill, she had left the young lady alone in retirement, and had immediately entered the secret passage to ascertain if her

suspicious regarding Mr. Traver's attentions to Miss Angier were well founded. She arrived under the statue in time to hear the engagement confirmed, and heard the lady acknowledge the receipt of the miniature. Aware of the treacherous character of the man with whom she had to deal, she had watched his every movement during his intercourse with Kate Angier. His attentions during the reading of the novel had appeared more marked and devoid of caution than usual. The time had evidently arrived when she felt bound to interpose for the trusting girl's salvation. She reached the hollow pedestal in the midst of his confession of attachment and heard him insist that the engagement should remain secret. The experience of the past warned her of his evil intent. She knew his vaulting ambition would never permit him to marry a poor girl of Miss Angier's position. She resolved to warn her, to save her. Mrs. Baltimore's request that the intimacy should be broken had only strengthened her in her holy purpose. She had sought an interview with the young lady; and, having secured her assent to the conditions, hastened away to the mansion to watch the movements of Nicholas Traver and the artist's sister, who were evidently paired for the evening. For a long time they wandered about the gardens, and she had cautiously followed, her dark dress enabling her to remain concealed in the shadows of the shrubbery. In passing her once she had heard Nicholas Traver propose to visit the saloon and view the fountain of mermaids by moonlight. His suggestion was acquiesced in by his companion; and Nora hastened away to secure Miss Angier's presence at the interview. She earnestly desired that they should converse near the statue of Vigilance. She had observed that the divan under it was a favorite resort of Nicholas Traver. Success had attended her in her calculations and the evil purpose of the man was foiled. She now advised Miss Angier to play her cards with a view to commit the deceiver to paper in his avowals of love, that she might be

the means of saving Miss Rogers also. The secret of the hidden way was to be revealed to no one. The artist's sister was to be put on her guard by Miss Angier's management alone. With this understanding they parted in the garden; and Nora was soon after summoned by a maid to the presence of Mrs. Baltimore. The purpose for which she was called by the mistress of "The Glen" was to secure her advice in regard to what lawyer she should consult in making her will.



CHAPTER XXII.

THE door of the private library where Mrs. Baltimore was seated was opened by a servant, and Mr. Rutherford was announced. She was awaiting his arrival. Seated in a large arm-chair covered with green leather, she had been examining a bundle of legal papers. The parchment-wrapper and tape had been laid aside, and the papers were scattered over her table. It was her private room for the transaction of business—small, elegantly furnished in colors of green and oak—where she was accustomed to hold consultations with Nora, who acted in the capacity of her steward. The services of the lawyer had been secured on the recommendation of his friend the old nurse. She had only mentioned that he was young and struggling in his profession, but was worthy of trust, and clear-headed in the transaction of legal business. The servant closed the door upon retiring, and the young widow saw that she was confronted by a man in iron-grey dress. A quick, searching look informed her that he was clad in coarse, cheap garments; had a black necktie and a rolling collar; possessed a mouth of wonderful proportions for the destruction of bread and butter, and an eye which looked empire. She arose courteously, and extended her hand to him.

"I am glad to know you, Mr. Rutherford. Mrs. Rudd, my friend and steward, is your eulogist. She informs me that you are eminently capable in your profession, and, at her request, I have sent for you. Be seated, if you please."

The man in iron-grey bowed low, and, without a word, drew a chair near to the table. His first glance at her upon entering the apartment gave him the impression of beauty, grace, modesty. His tastes were in the line of blonde ladies, and he did not care to study her further. He noticed that her eyelashes drooped, and that she did not look long and steadily at him. Finding that reticence was her style, he cared not to intrude upon it; and after glancing about the apartment and dwelling with peculiar interest upon the elegant cases of books, he turned to the papers on the table, and said, pleasantly:

"Your pursuits are anomalous for a lady, if I may judge from the titles upon the back of some of these papers. You have been making yourself familiar, it appears, with the intricacies of equity and law."

"My position, sir, is anomalous," was the reply, coupled with a smile and a glance at him.

"In what respect, madam?" he asked, touched by the gentle tones of the lady's voice. Woman's real power is condensed in that low, sweet accentuation, if she could but learn to employ it alone.

"At an age when most girls enter upon the duties of married life, and think experience cheaply bought in four or five years' trial, I find myself a widow, with the responsibilities of managing an immense estate in lands and stocks and mortgages. There is property enough represented in these papers on my table to satisfy the wants of ten large families of rank and consequence in society. The judicious management of it all requires no trifling amount of industry and attention."

The broad smile which illumined his exaggerated feature, as he looked playfully at her, made one forget how dread-

fully nature had violated proportion in moulding his mouth. Every line of it was teeming with fun, as he answered :

"There are no doubt a few self-sacrificing children of men who would be willing to take a share of this property, and thus relieve you of the burden partially."

Mrs. Baltimore laughed at his raillery; and, relieved of the impression of solemnity and sternness which his features had indicated upon his entrance, shot bolder glances at him from under her eyelashes. Her idea of power in his eyes was confirmed. He loves books, she thought, recalling his long gaze at her book-shelves. Now, if those grey eyes could be experimented with in the realm of science or art, what strange light might be evolved from them! His forehead confirms my suspicion of mental power. I cannot conceive what Nora means by his struggling. His garments are plain enough, but his ease of manner and his self-possession indicate claims to notice which society can hardly refuse. No doubt he is a lion in literary circles. That iron-grey suit is the very eccentricity and armor of genius. I rather like it. It is just the thing to grapple and wrestle intellectually in. I pronounce mentally in favor of iron-grey. He is all power and humor; no gentleness, I predict. This train of thought was running upon time in her brain. She had to check it for her answer:

"You are right: we often find fault with people and things that we would not part with under any circumstances. No doubt I am just as reluctant to part with my estates as the poorest man in this neighborhood. I would like to have two sets of brains—one to take care of my property, and the other to enjoy it."

"Ladies accomplish that result by marrying, sometimes," was the instant response, the genial smile again sweeping away her reserve.

"They stake their all upon a lottery then," she said, laughing, without knowing why she laughed. His humor was irresistible. She laughed because he laughed. Then he

checked himself, as if he fancied he was trespassing upon her time, and said :

“You sent for me, Mrs. Baltimore, to write your will for you. If you will indicate your wishes, if you have them accurately arranged in your mind, I will put them on paper for you in legal phrase. If you are doubtful of what the law permits you to do, I will gladly aid you by my advice. If your plans of disposing of your property are intricate, it may be necessary for me to consult men of more legal experience than myself. It would be absurd for me to pretend to be a great legal light, and to know everything accurately about wills and testaments. I know enough, however, for ordinary purposes of disposition of estates by will. With this preface, I am at your disposal.”

This was said so naturally, modestly, without the least vestige of conceit, that the widow was charmed. She gained confidence, and looked more steadily at the young lawyer as she spoke.

“I have no question of your ability to advise me, Mr. Rutherford, as Nora declares in your favor with great earnestness ; and she is a genius in many respects. The lawyer who has been my counsel in other matters I have discarded from my confidence, though he was sent to me by my father. He was too obscure in his legal phraseology in several matters of business, and I cannot endure what I cannot be made to understand. In my management of my own affairs, I must and will know what I am doing. But my principal motive in dispensing with his services is the assurance which came to me that he acted on one occasion with marked meanness and want of gratitude. The lawyer I allude to is the Hon. George Robinson, member of Congress for this district. Do you know him ?”

“Very well,” was the response. “I do not think, however, I ever heard anything discreditable of him.”

“Perhaps not,” said Mrs. Baltimore. “His offense would not be considered of great consequence by men generally,

but it shocked me greatly. It appears that a young orator, who possesses great powers of eloquence and persuasion, by his efforts during the canvass elected this gentleman to office. It was generally conceded that he had done so by his eloquence. Hon. George Robinson, though solicited afterwards to contribute a few law-books to aid this young man in his legal career, absolutely refused. The candidate who was defeated, like a generous being as he was, was so shocked by the man's hardness of heart and his want of common gratitude, when he learned of this refusal through a secret source of information (for the request was not a public one), that he quietly purchased a set of law-books and deposited them upon the young orator's door-step at night. I think the ingratitude of the one and the magnanimity of the other are unparalleled. I made bold to tell Mr. Robinson this on his last professional visit to me. He did not attempt to dispute the fact of his refusal, but insisted that there was no legal or moral reason why he should give away law-books. The man did not even look ashamed, and I parted with him professionally for ever. Nora told me of the whole affair, and that is the reason why I am left without a legal adviser."

"I shall be happy to supply any deficiency that I can, Mrs. Baltimore," was the reply, delivered with an effort, at least, at calmness. She fancied the young lawyer turned a trifle paler, and that the movement he made towards the table arose from uneasiness. Not dreaming whom she was addressing, she ascribed his manner to a dignified unwillingness to speak disrespectfully of a fellow-member of the bar. Respecting this delicacy of his profession, she changed the subject quickly, and proceeded to state, in detail, the plans she contemplated in the disposition of her immense estate, in the event of her dying unmarried. An enumeration of her possessions became necessary to a full comprehension of her wishes in framing the will. As a guide to his memory, the lawyer noted down with pencil and paper the various items of her wealth, as she gave them to him. After a long column had

been written in pencil of lands, leases, bank stocks, mortgages, personal effects, et cetera, and she had directed names of legatees to be noted down opposite the different amounts, the lawyer laid down his pencil and said :

"That is a wonderful column of what the clergy call the filthy lucre. This is all, then, complete. As I glance my eye over the figures it appears to foot up millions. Now for the duration of the estates you propose to create. Are these devises to be absolute, or do you propose to create life estates in some of them, with remainder to others ; or are any of them to be trust estates for the benefit of those who are infants or incompetent to manage property ?"

"Wait a minute," said Mrs. Baltimore. "You have only the list of my property in America. Make a heading for another column—call it what you please—it will be my funds and securities in Europe."

"What ! more ?" exclaimed the astonished lawyer. "Have you committed a great crime, that Heaven has imposed this enormous burden upon you ? Please tell me, do you sleep nights, Mrs. Baltimore ?"

"Money never keeps me awake, that's sure," was her reply.

"Well, I know I shouldn't sleep a wink with such responsibilities. I'd be for ever hiring guards to protect me, and then sitting up all night to keep a sharp lookout on the guards myself."

Mrs. Baltimore looked archly at him as she answered :

"That shows the goodness and forbearance of Providence. I have noticed that persons of brains, whose exact and careful business habits of acting and thinking would be overwhelmed by the cares of great wealth, seldom have it thrust upon them. They rarely possess more than a competency. On the other hand, those who would be the last ones selected by a vote of the intelligence of the community to be the proper recipients of wealth, somehow succeed in gaining possession of it. They hold it, manage it, and appear to stagger very little under their burdens. They succeed very

well. Look at the holders of great wealth among your immediate acquaintances. What proportion of them rank among what you would style 'the ablest minds of the land?' There's a fatality about it, or rather God prefers not as a rule to combine accumulative power with mental power. I do not deny the exceptions, but what is the rule?"

Rutherford looked at her earnestly. She was a woman of ideas, then. She thought and reasoned independently. It might be well to look at her dark eyes more closely. Intellect sometimes catches its inspirations from the sympathetic eyes of strangers. The lambent brilliancy of his genius-orbs was manifest as he said to the young widow, who had moved her chair nearer to the table, and now sat with her cheek resting upon her closed hand, and the symmetry of her wrist revealing itself beneath her mourning sleeve:

"Those who have looked long and earnestly upon nature—animate or inanimate—are prepared for anything. The bird that I reclaim from the wilderness and teach to regard my hand as a petting friend, charms me by the rich, aye, gorgeous plumage of his species. Why did not God endow him with the gift of song? I weary of him at last, and turn to the plain homely thrush, who pours the little rivers of his melody down the wild rock-turnings of my heart, till cascades of pleasure foam there and sparkle in the sun, o'erarched by the rainbow of enjoyment. He speaks to my soul. God has given him power—internal power—and he perches and sings beside the scarlet robe and the tuft of black-crown feathers till the gay bird looks stupid and tame. Why his plain robe is never exchanged for the other's scarlet mantle, I cannot tell. I gathered some wild flowers once, so beautiful and bright, that I detected them afar off, and climbed a dangerous place to own them. I walked home with them nodding their beautiful heads at me, and attracting the eyes of everyone who passed by. But when I sought for fragrance, there was none. The simple cluster of tiny white flowers, that gently waved on the bush beside my window, filled the air

with sweetness and balmy life, and I turned to them in preference. I sat beside a girl so richly endowed with beauty and languishing grace that I fancied for a time my ideal was realized ; but when a plain simple companion of hers entered, and the conversation commenced, the sceptre passed from the exterior to the interior beauty. Had that beautiful girl the gift of sense and appreciation also, she would rule all things with an iron hand. Too much of power would attend the combination. So it is of wealth and intellect. They are dangerous in one man, but exercise a salutary balance upon society in two."

She was regarding him earnestly. Once or twice their eyes met, and the consciousness flashed to each that they were created to quench their intellectual thirst on the same bank of the stream of life. The voices on the other and lower bank seemed far off and husky with the sensual cries of existence. For them poesy seemed to lower her flowery ladder and invite them to the ethereal. Nature, like an angel, stood flinging wide the portals of her realm, and pointing through it all to heaven beyond. Kindred fires were lighted from the watch-towers of their eyes, and in pleasant communion the moments sped away. The struggling lawyer and the heiress of millions forgot the business of the hour, and over the paper representatives of opulence exchanged or clashed the crystal goblets of thought, and remembered not the scythe-bearer who calls for the account of stewardship at every turning of his glass.

At length Rutherford recollected himself, and paused in the midst of one of his descriptions.

"But this delightful interchange of thought is the violation of all the laws of business and order. I have been tempted away from duty. This will requires much labor. Please indicate the items of this second column, and I will soon be able to commence in earnest."

His companion reluctantly relinquished the conversation, saying :

"Making a will is preparing for death. It is one preparation, at least. I trust every other effort to be ready will be as diligently followed up as this. Now we will go on with the inventory of goods and chattels. First, my English stocks, two hundred thousand dollars. Put that down as a legacy to my uncle, Hugh Winchester."

She looked at the broad white forehead and grey eye as he wrote. Legacy after legacy was indicated by her, and at length the column was complete. Then he prepared the paper for the will carefully, and laying the pile of half-sheets beside him, commenced to write the opening acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Deity. He read it to her as his pen flew along the paper, and as the style had not been adopted in the will of her deceased husband, it was strange and novel to her, causing an emotion of awe. She interrupted:

"Mr. Rutherford, do you commence every will with that recognition of God? Suppose one does not believe in the existence of a Supreme Being?"

"Then it is not entered at the opening of the instrument. It has nothing to do with the validity of the will. A man who denies God, of course, will not in the last act of his life acknowledge him on paper. I will change it, if you so prefer."

He looked up earnestly at her from his writing. She smiled and said:

"Go on. I don't wish to deny Him. He is the dearest friend and companion of my existence. Can you imagine a child, nursed and watched for years by old Nora, to be ignorant of God? Go on. I did not know the custom. It is appropriate and beautiful."

The lawyer rapidly proceeded in drawing the will. At every new clause he paused and explained what he was about to write, and, securing her assent, went on with his writing. He indicated to her at every step what legal terms meant, and her quick comprehension found no diffi-

culty in expressing itself. He was delighted with her sense; and, before the document was finished, both had formed pleasant impressions of each other's character. It was several hours before the will was finished, and during his labors Mrs. Baltimore ordered lunch to be brought to her private library for two. The entrance of the servant with the elegant salver gave opportunity for another animated discussion between the mistress of "The Glen" and her lawyer. After the lunch was over, Rutherford paced up and down the apartment for a few minutes during the discussion of the expediency of inserting a particular condition in the will. His hands were crossed behind his back, and he stepped firmly and evenly back and forth as he talked. She observed, then, with a woman's quick eye, how powerfully and beautifully nature had moulded him, as if to atone for giving him such a mouth. There was not a guest on her estate who could compare with him in symmetry and splendor of figure. Sir Francis Cleveland was the nearest approach to him in manliness of person. The point of difference being settled at length, the lawyer resumed his seat and proceeded with the will. Finally his labors were over, and the young widow attached her signature and seal to the document. He directed her how to proceed in obtaining witnesses to the will; and then, at her request, drew a receipt for the amount due him for his services. She gave him her check on the bank for the amount; and, after a few formal remarks, he bowed himself out of the room.

Mrs. Baltimore remained in her seat for a few seconds in profound study. She was trying to conjecture where she had seen the lawyer's likeness before, or some person resembling him. She felt confident that the peculiar mouth, and forehead, and eyes resembled some one she had known. Her memory proved treacherous to her at this time, and, rising from her seat, she proceeded to lock up the unattested will in her escritoire. Then, leaving the apartment, and passing out through the hall of the front building, she seated herself

in the shade of the stone porch and looked out upon the park. The figure of the lawyer was just passing away under the oaks, mounted upon a black steed. A vehicle had passed him approaching the house, and in it she recognised the figures of the artist and his sister, Lucretia. They were returning from a drive. The horses dashed up to the door, and the two alighted, a servant being in waiting for their arrival. The first remark of Rogers, on saluting the mistress of the house, was:

“I see you have had a visit from Golden-Lip.”

“What do you mean? You speak in riddles.”

“Not at all. There he goes; we have just passed him. Why do you look so amazed? I intended to be intelligible, whether I have succeeded or not. That was Golden-Lip, the man in iron-grey, who just left this door on horseback.”

“I am as much in the dark as before. Who is Golden-Lip? I never heard of such a person. That gentleman who has just left the park is a young lawyer named Rutherford. He has been here on business. Please explain yourself, Mr. Rogers.”

“Never heard of Golden-Lip, the glorious orator of the highlands; the rising sun of oratory, the master of the passions! I beg your pardon, I had forgotten how recently you have returned to your native land. There goes a persecuted, struggling child of genius, who is thrusting his great soul into the face of prejudice, and he is going to sweep everything before him. He is just at the critical period now. Oh! you have never heard him. He is a young giant. He melted me to tears when I listened to him. I was opposed to him politically; but he vanquished me, as he has many hundreds. I will follow him to the death in the principles he has espoused. Oh, you must hear him. It is like having all the past and beautiful dreams of your life recalled and made real. He removes the veil from facts and men, and makes truth so beautiful and alluring that one yearns to do rightly, and honestly, and nobly. He has a mission on earth,

and he feels it. Golden-Lip! His name is in every mouth. He is master of the soul."

The artist's eye fairly flashed with enthusiasm as he spoke. Mrs. Baltimore looked at him in amazement.

"That young man an orator! I can readily believe him a poet of power and humor; but there appears to be little of the energy and indomitable will about him which can storm the citadel of prejudice. There is too much of repose and acquiescence in his manner. He is too sweet and beautiful in his thoughts to grapple with real life."

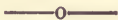
"Don't you believe *that*, Mrs. Baltimore. Build up now the strongest prejudice in your mind that you are capable of. He has no father, no mother. He is reputed to be an illegitimate son of the deceased Judge Holden. He had few friends a few months ago. Ladies will not recognise him. Society welcomes him not. There is no personal stain of immorality about him. But he has no position, except what his mental power is building for him. Now go and hear him. He is out upon the stump again for the fall election. I tell you he will rend your soul."

"I heard of a young orator who elected Mr. Robinson to Congress," she replied, musingly.

"The very man—the very Golden-Lip himself," exclaimed the artist. "That was his first effort. Many applauded that attempt, but many more sneered. Since that time he has been more successful. I heard a prominent member of the opposition party declare, that notwithstanding his life-long attachment to party and party prejudices, that young man went through him like a whirlwind. It is rumored that this gentleman to whom I allude was so impressed by his earnest eloquence, that he secretly caused a handsome present of law-books to be left at his door. He has been wretchedly poor; but his prospects are brightening, thank God."

And she had unfortunately alluded to his poverty and destitution in his very presence; harassed that noble, struggling heart, by referring to the base ingratitude of a man

wealthy and influential. She felt that she would rather have lost her right hand than be guilty of such an act. It was too late; and he was gone. The comforting reflection was, that she had expressed her sentiments pretty clearly and emphatically in his presence regarding the splendor of the Hon. George Robinson's character. She was certain Rutherford must know that she had been unconscious whom she was addressing at the time of their interview. Annoyed at the pain she had occasioned through inadvertence she promised Rogers that she would not fail, on some favorable opportunity, to hear this young giant of the hills, and then entered the house again with her guests.



CHAPTER XXIII.

LIFT her softly, that she may look for the last time upon the setting sun. Gently, tenderly raise the delicate, weary, drooping little frame, that her last glimpse of the beautiful world may be comfortable and easy. Alas! she is dying. Exhausted nature has yielded at last to the disease. The child of shame, with the lily-white heart, is passing away to the arms of God who calls her. Her dreams of the angels will become reality. Already the Good Shepherd is reaching forth his arms to the little stray, and beside him gather the angels appointed to bear her from shame to glory. The pattering feet which wandered up and down the meadows all day, looking for flowers to honor the messengers of God, never once rested upon her bed at night till she had prayed to her Father in heaven to bless her and love her. She is ready; for, under the pious teaching of her Magdalen mother and old Nora, she lived much in heaven. She yearned towards it, looked towards it, prayed towards it. And now the little life has finished its mission; and in the arms of Nora, the faithful she is raised, to look for the last

time upon the west. When that sun shall rise again, little Zoe will be beyond the stars. Come closer, trembling mother, and take the last look of your darling, your beautiful all. When Zoe has gone the cross which you have taken will bear more painfully upon your lonely shoulders. You will rise in the morning; but the little bed will be empty. There will be no sound of pattering feet by day, no song of the angels at twilight. You have prayed that the cross of our blessed Lord may be your portion, that sin may be vanquished, and you may win eternal peace. That prayer will be answered; but how can you bear it alone, without the bird-voice of your child to sing to you by the way? A little advocate will sing beside the great white throne for you; but you will see her no more. Bear the anguish bravely, and whisper the name of Jesus, and He will come to you. Draw closer now and listen, for the eyes of the child, with a persistency and a trust which only a child can exhibit, are looking out towards that gate where last he went out—the beautiful man, her father, who promised to return. Night after night has Zoe climbed to that window, to watch that same gate, and wonder why he did not appear. In that one glimpse of him, during his stolen interview, the child gave to him all that her little heart could give. She trusted, and loved, and longed for his promised return. She still asks to be raised and adjusted upon the pillows, that she may see him return. Fainter and fainter grew the dim rays of the vanished sun, darker and darker gathered the shadows, and still did the dying child look out for his coming. She murmured at last:

“Tell him, dear mother, that I died looking out towards the gate, and put back the hands of the angels for him. They reached forth for me twice, but I put back the hands of my dear angels for him. Tell him I saved the lilies under the willow for him. He will find them; they’re all growing by the water. I wouldn’t touch one of them till he came. Kiss me, mother; you will be lonely without little Zoe. But I’ll

be an angel; and then I can come to see you and Nora. Will you put lilies in the window for me? Oh! I do wish he would come—my father would come.”

The darkness had fallen densely, and the watchers could no longer behold the features of Zoe. They laid her gently back upon the pillows and listened in silence to her short breathing. Then all was still, as they prayed in their hearts. A star twinkled forth from the sky as a token that darkness was past. Aye! the darkness and sorrows of shame and of life had vanished away in the glories of Heaven. The young lily was blooming in the garden of God. Rise, mother, and pray, and struggle, and die! Broken-hearted and lonely, repentant and mild, the Saviour will guide thee at last to thy child.

All night long she watched beside her dead. Nora had left her, called away by her duties at “The Glen.” The angels had departed with their spirit-burden: only the marble-white casket was left to her. But as she prayed and trusted in God the promise was fulfilled. A hush of peace and divine consolation filled the room; the spirit of God passed over her heart, and all was still. Patiently, purely, to live and suffer, to love His poor, and to die in His grace, was the path of her life. She bowed to the mandate; and when the morning sun fell upon the face of the lovely sleeper beside her, she arose and walked out to summon her servants to pray. The influence of Nora had been exerted upon that household for years; and now the promised fruit rewarded the laborer. From the night her child passed away until the day of her own death the sorrowful mother, morning and evening, gathered her servants to read and pray.

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A princely band swept by, with dancing steeds and long plumes fluttering in the air. A snow-white steed, of Arabian blood, led the gay pageant, and his fiery temper demanded the rider's constant skill and attention to keep him in control, and check him to the slower pace of her company. The

lady's escort was an English gentleman, who rode a powerful gelding of a chestnut color—spirited and uneasy, but minding easily his guiding-rein, and apparently unambitious for a race. Ladies and gentlemen, well mounted, followed them, laughing in glee, and flinging back and forth to each other, as they moved along the highway, jests and sparkles of fun. The rear of the cavalcade was brought up by a lady and gentleman, who appeared better pleased to converse in earnest tones with each other than to join the revel of repartee and wit ahead of them. The dilatory two were Nicholas Traver and Miss Rogers. On horseback Mrs. Baltimore's father was in his glory—self-possessed and conscious of his equestrian superiority. His iron-grey stallion feared his rider, and him alone. The horse paced on, to accommodate the ambling step of the lady's black gelding; but he did so only under fear. His ordinary wild flights were taken with his master alone, and he much preferred them to his present tame method of procedure. Lucretia Rogers possessed an Italian style of face, and her dark curls glistened in the sun, as they trembled in unison with the pace of her gelding. Her manner was ordinarily vivacious, but the present subject of conversation seemed to reduce her to a sober mood. She had been secretly engaged to Nicholas Traver a short time previous to this ride, and he was earnestly stating to her now some propositions for the future. How startled would both have been could they have known the thoughts of Miss Angier, who was riding just before them, and making merry with her companions, as if nothing had interposed to make her despise and loathe the imperial horseman behind her.

The party had just crossed a bridge over a stream which wandered off under rows of willows, and the last hollow sound of passing hoofs had ceased when a gate was opened on the right, and egress given to the highway for a funeral train which solemnly moved out from the boundaries of an estate. Nicholas Traver had just stated to his companion, in

answer to her inquiry, that never since the death of his wife had he looked upon any woman with thoughts of love until he had met with her.

"And has no woman ever loved you?" was the persistent inquiry.

"Not to my knowledge," was the reply, delivered with a smile.

"And the treasures of your heart have been hoarded up for me alone?"

"Yes, for you alone!" He turned his eyes from his companion and saw the funeral train emerging into the highway. Checking his horse, he asked of a man standing near the gate:

"Whose funeral is this?"

"Little Zoé Granville is dead," was the response.

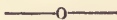
How startled he looked, that proud, beautiful face, in the sunlight. His mother's name again. The voice of his childhood's friend calling to him from eternity. He saw her grave again and remembered his vows upon the cold turf; the broken vows, the desecrated grave—the violated memory. And the little girl who had opened her heart to him, had kissed him in trust, had looked anxiously, trustingly, no doubt, for his return, had died and her arms were closed to him for ever! His lily child had met him at the gate where he had promised to enter in and protect her, love her, elevate her to honor; and her cold form, under the funeral canopy, was the dagger of remorse. Then and there he had vowed also to God, and promised to live a new life. His vows were again broken; another grave was opened; when would his grave yawn in the sunlight? Any one would have forgiven him at that moment of agony and remorse, he looked so faint and sick and weary of himself. He felt so conscious of his utter unworthiness, he yearned to be a child again, and to have a pure finger touch him in love; to have a child's prayer said for him, and then to be buried in a child's grave. He felt that his place was not upon the proud steed, but low in the dust, where the funeral car of the innocent and the lovely could

pass over his faithless form. He dismounted from his steed, and stood holding the bridle with uncovered head as the funeral passed by. He saw the wreath of lilies on the little coffin, and he remembered the lily she clasped when she was dreaming of the angels. His lip trembled, and tears gathered to his eyes. A calm, beautiful face, framed in a crape bonnet, passed him next; and he knew not the cross of ragged iron she was wearing pressed closely, tightly to her heart. That calm exterior was the face of the future angel. She did not see him. Her eyes took notice of no passing thing. She was trying to catch the loving eyes of her God; and the train moved on. Never mind, Nicholas Traver, the surprise of your companion at your strange conduct. Be silent and listen, for it is the last warning your soul will receive. The recording angel is noting down this last opportunity of grace extended to you. Your account of divine warnings is about to be closed; your guardian angel is looking in your face with an intensity of love which would melt your soul, could you but see it. Oh! start this time in sincerity towards Heaven.

The train of woe passed by, and mounting his steed, Nicholas Traver said seriously to his companion:

“The death of a child, in its innocence and purity, always affects me so. Let us rejoin our party.”

The horses bounded rapidly along the highway. The betrayer hurried on to the open arms of society, while the betrayed moved slowly on to the grave of her child.



CHAPTER XXIV.

BREAKFAST had been announced a full half-hour at “The Glen,” and still two seats at the round-table remained unoccupied. Two plates were clean and glistening in their porcelain whiteness. Two gold napkin-rings still retained posses-

sion of their napkins. Occasionally an eye would be directed towards the door opening into the hall, and an exclamation be heard at the unaccountably long delay of the strangers in making their appearance. Two new guests had arrived late the night before; so Mrs. Baltimore had informed the assembled breakfast party. An unfortunate break-down of a vehicle had detained one of the new-comers upon the highway till near the hour of midnight. The other arrival was delayed to an unseasonable hour by a collision of two steamers on the river. These disasters were ample apology for the non-appearance of the two, as the mistress of the house remarked. Curiosity had been aroused with unusual vehemence in reference to one arrival by the fact that the strange lady had been styled very beautiful by one of the gentlemen at the table. Indeed she had been pronounced "the belle of the county." He refused to retract one iota of his extravagant epithets of praise, and assured his listeners that they would soon coincide with his estimate of her.

The other stranger—a gentleman to whose family Mrs. Baltimore felt under obligations for attentions extended to her in the city of New York, upon her arrival from Europe—was a young man reared and educated in the city, and who had never made himself familiar with country life. He was expected to prove a gay gallant, and be the personification of city elegance and fashion. His arrival was calculated, therefore, to produce a flutter among the ladies present, and they were looking for his appearance with as much interest and curiosity as for that of "the county belle." He was mentioned at the table as "Mr. Fred. Cutaway;" and while his name and family were under discussion he made his appearance at the hall-door, which was swung open for him by a servant in grey livery and white gloves; and, advancing towards Mrs. Baltimore with a mincing step occasioned by his unwillingness to dispense heel-music in his walk, he bowed low, and said in a high key:

"Somnus grappled me so tight, and proved itself so supe-

rior to my delicate organization, that I found it extremely difficult to shake it off. I trust you will excuse me. Ha! ha! I would not convey the impression that I am repugnant to late hours—not at all. But if this disaster to the steamboat had occurred a half-hour earlier, I should probably have descended from my chamber from five to ten minutes sooner. I hope I have not detained you, madam. I apologize to all of you, ladies; and I trust you will all pardon my delay when you observe how delicately I feed, and how brief is the time occupied in my repast.”

The accent of the young man was so peculiarly marked by a squeak, that it was almost impossible to restrain laughter upon first hearing it. It was coupled, moreover, with such a singular personal formation and style of dress, that the ladies glanced at each other with eyes which seemed to say, “I withdraw my claims to his attention; you may have him entirely to yourself.”

Mrs. Baltimore assured the new guest that every one at “The Glen” was expected to consult only personal convenience in rising, and that Mr. Fred. Cutaway must never allow himself to be hurried or incommoded on any occasion by considerations of courtesy to other guests. He would always find servants ready to serve him with breakfast at any hour before one o’clock: sleep at “The Glen” was to be courted, not bounded and restricted. He was then directed to a seat beside Miss Delavan. As he passed around to his place, mincing along and bowing as he was introduced to the company, an excellent opportunity was afforded to notice his costume for the morning. He was about five feet and nine inches in height, and slim in figure. He wore a suit of lemon-colored flannel. Coat, pants, and vest were of the same tropical hue. His coat, with its huge pearl buttons, resembled him in name. It was a cutaway. The knight of the needle and shears had commenced to cut away the front skirts of this remarkable lemon-coat at or near the bottom of the vest, and had continued to cut away towards the rear

of Mr. Fred. Cutaway, until the idea of the coat possessing a skirt became purely mythical. About four inches up from the bottom of this mythical skirt in the rear, the glisten of two large pearl buttons was seen. The pants were gathered in tucks around his waist, and extended downwards to his patent-leather boots in legs which resembled candle-moulds. It was a question of serious study how he had succeeded in thrusting his feet through the small ends of these candle-mould pants. His coat was tightly buttoned—two pearl buttons of the vest showing above, and two below the coat. He wore a lemon-colored cravat of silk and a standing-collar, manifest only in a white-starched line of linen, which threatened to cut his throat as a compensation for holding up his chin. His eyes and hair were in keeping with his garments—both bright lemon-color. The hair was parted in the middle, and cut as short as that of the inmates of Sing-Sing. His features were thin and regular, approaching nearly to effeminacy. A few yellow hairs bloomed on each cheek, and were pulled out into the skeleton of English whiskers.

As this yellow personage passed around to his seat at the table, Hugh Winchester whispered to his companion on the left:

“Is that what is called a butterfly of fashion?”

“No,” replied Miss Rogers, in the same covert tone of voice. “That is a yellow caterpillar come to forage. Didn’t you notice how it walked?”

“Hush, you will be heard. Don’t laugh,” whispered the gentleman again; “Grace will not tolerate disrespect at this table, I assure you.”

“We must be kind to all God’s creatures,” replied his companion.

“I have just received an idea. What do you think of it?” whispered Hugh Winchester, again. “We must have Mr. Fred. Cutaway in some tableau. You recollect we are to have a tableau party soon. Let’s have ‘The Early Bird

catches the Worm;’ let Caterpillar be the worm, you the bird—hush! here comes the blonde angel.”

Into the room, like a gleam of sunlight, glided Marie Heron; a pure white morning wrapper, with no relieving colors or ornaments save the single branch of red coral that clasped her dress at the throat, was belted at her waist by a white ribbon. Noiselessly she passed to the side of Mrs. Baltimore, the sunbeams dancing upon her light-brown curls, and the rose-flush enthroned upon her fair round cheeks. Her rich, ripe lips were moist, as if they had been sipping the morning dew from the flowers. Half timidly, half smilingly, she extended her hand to the mistress of the house, and then glanced over the faces of the party at the table. Her bosom rose and fell tremulously under the thin folds of her robe, for she had run rapidly down the stairs and along the deserted halls. She was evidently surprised at the number of the guests. Her liquid eyes of heavenly blue half veiled themselves when unmistakable glances of admiration greeted her appearance. Gentlemen arose from their seats involuntarily as the words of introduction were pronounced; and Mr. Nicholas Traver escorted her to the vacant seat. She gave him her hand in recollection of their former acquaintance.

Seated beside Mr. Fred. Cutaway, Marie could not avoid conversation with him occasionally, as he turned to her from Mary Delavan. But she soon discovered more congeniality on her right, where the elegant father of Mrs. Baltimore was seated. With rare skill and consideration, that gentleman diverted the conversation into channels with which she was familiar; and soon the slight embarrassment of meeting so many strangers was swept away. Her eyes ranged more freely over the guests of the round table, and she soon discovered that Reynolds Winchester’s eyes travelled more frequently in her direction than any other. That gentleman found some difficulty in attracting her attention when he wished to address her, in consequence of the brilliant talker

on her right. Finally, in a lull of the conversation, and when Mr. Traver was occupied in sending her cup after more coffee, Reynolds Winchester caught her eye and said :

"We are divided from each other, Miss Heron, by the breadth of a town; and if that church-spire was two inches further south, I should be entirely shut out from the view, even of your face. Looking at the silver town reminds me of you."

"That is a rare compliment, Mr. Winchester," was her reply.

"How so?"

"Because a glimpse of that silver memorial should naturally recall the heroes and the heroine. In allowing your thoughts to roam towards me, you violate good taste. The memorial recalls greatness! To you it suggests littleness—that is me. It proves bad taste in you, and still pays me a high compliment."

"No," said he, laughing; "that will not do. Thinking of the heroes naturally and properly recalls you. I do not violate good taste, as you shall see. In admiring the heroism of those four men, I must think of you. Did not their valor save you? I have heard so, at least. Thus valor saved beauty. I admire the valor, and it suggests at once the beauty which was saved. But tell me, did those men really save you?"

"They did not; they saved my father. I was already on the street when they appeared."

"And one perished in the flames; was that the fact?" he inquired.

"Yes! one noble fellow forfeited his life."

"And have you no idea who any of them were?"

"It is said that the chief of the fire department is missing. It appears to be almost a certainty that he is the man lost."

This reply was an evasion of the question. She really knew one other of the four heroes, but his name was likely to tremble on her lips, and she would not pronounce it. It was a name for her that must remain unuttered. Its pro-

nunciation threatened her composure. She would not attempt it. She noticed that the eyes of Mrs. Baltimore were intently regarding her as she answered Mr. Winchester's inquiry. The mistress of the house followed up her uncle's question.

"Could you identify the faces of the men if you were to see them again, Miss Heron?"

"Their faces were like masks, Mrs. Baltimore, perfectly blackened with cinders, and their hair much burnt."

"Do you think you could recognise their voices, if you heard them again?" was the startling question.

"Very likely I might," said Marie, hoping this branch of interrogation would be pursued no further.

"Did you hear them *all* talk?" was the interrogatory from another part of the table.

"Yes, sir; I heard every voice."

"Were they gentlemen, Miss Heron?" squeaked in the high key-notes of Mr. Fred. Cutaway.

"Not if clothes are the standard," was the sharp response to this ill-timed inquiry.

"I could imagine of nothing more disagreeable than to be handled by low men, and tossed about by them at such a time of nervous excitement," put in again the squeak of the gentleman in lemon.

"I fancy you would find the burning up into a crisp much more disagreeable," was the rejoinder, as Marie turned in amazement to her left-hand companion.

"I beg leave to differ, Miss Heron," persisted the squeaking voice. "I think the vulgar touch of plebeian hands would occasion such a shock to my nervous system that I should never regain my vitality. Perhaps my sensibilities are excessive, but really it would destroy all future enjoyment to be touched. Oh! mercy, just imagine it—touched!"

Everybody laughed, but Hugh Winchester said:

"There's a way always open to you, Mr. Cutaway, to escape such handling."

"I know it, Mr. Winchester; I'd frown them down; they never would withstand a gentleman's withering frown."

"That isn't my remedy for you, Mr. Cutaway."

"Ah! Mr. Winchester; what is it you would say? A remedy? I shall listen to you with pleasure."

The answer given to the gentleman in lemon brought down the house.

"Always wear a label: 'Sensitive Plant—not to be touched in time of fire.'"

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a servant with the letters by mail. Every one seemed anxious as the mistress of "The Glen" received the basket, and proceeded to read the address upon the letters. After she had distributed the letters to the fortunate ones, and they had broken the seals and were eagerly reading, Miss Angier, who had shaken out the folds of the morning newspaper, and hastily run her eyes over the headings of news, electrified every one by exclaiming:

"Terrible news for some one. I beg pardon for the interruption of you who are blessed with letters; but here is something in which some of you may be deeply interested. If you will permit me, I will read it for you."

Of course there was no objection to such a startling appeal. She was requested to read aloud, and returning her eye to the heading, she proceeded to enlighten her hearers thus:

"HEAVY ROBBERY!"

"Daring and successful attempt to plunder the National Bank!

"\$80,000 *in funds and securities removed*—A part of the money recovered; the balance carried off by an accomplice. One of the robbers arrested with a part of the stolen money on his person.

[*"Later."*]

"Clarence Rutherford identified as one of the thieves

who entered the National Bank. The stolen money found on his person. Intense indignation on the part of his friends. They declare him to be the victim of a political conspiracy. His *arrest and commitment*.

“At a late hour last night, somewhere between the hours of eleven and twelve o'clock, the man employed as night-watch by the National Bank was overpowered by two men and gagged, and, after being tied hand and foot, was laid in the inclosure on the south side of the bank, while the thieves effected an entrance into the bank through a window on that side. After prying open the iron shutters, they cut through the sash, and secured admittance to the President's room. From this point they succeeded by means of secret keys in entering the vaults, opened the iron safes, and rifled them of their contents, removing in bills, gold, and securities, about \$80,000.

“They had barely time to secure their plunder and be off, for the night-watch succeeded in freeing himself of the gag, and called loudly for help. The police arriving upon the spot, delivered him from the ropes by which he was bound, and learning the direction the thieves had taken, started off in pursuit. They succeeded in overtaking one of the rascals several streets off, as he was turning a corner. He was dressed in a dark-grey coat and pants, as the night-watch had informed them, and on his person were found several bundles of the bank-bills. Upon taking him to the station-house he was identified as Clarence Rutherford, a young man of some oratorical ability, and who has a small legal practice in town. On his person was found also a check on the bank, signed by Mrs. Baltimore. It is due to the young man to state that he indignantly denied the charge of theft, and declared that he had found the money on the street. There is a difference of opinion regarding his guilt; but the magistrate, in default of bail, considered it his duty to commit him to the county jail. The great bulk, however, of the

stolen property has not been recovered, and the bank has been obliged to close its doors. We do not recollect ever to have seen such a financial panic in our streets. Some persons assert that young Rutherford is innocent, and that his efforts for a certain political party have been the occasion of commencing a political persecution against him. We do not, however, coincide with this view.' ”

Miss Angier let fall the paper with a “What do you all think of that?”

Before any of the guests of the house could express themselves concerning the robbery, a tall figure beside Mrs. Baltimore sprang up hastily to her feet, and with a countenance livid with excitement and rage, exclaimed :

“It’s false!—false as the black hearts that made the lie.”

Her piercing eyes searched every countenance at the table as she struggled for breath to speak again. Her power returned to her.

“I’ve nursed that boy when he was a feeble infant; I knew him well when he was a gay-hearted boy running about the meadows of Judge Holden’s estate. I’ve known him and his character for twenty-eight years, and any person, man or woman, that says he is dishonest, *lies!* He never touched anybody’s money that he did not come by honestly. If he says he found the money on the street, he did find it. It’s false, wicked, infamous, to trump up this charge to injure the prospects of that poor young man who is struggling so hard against poverty and misfortune.”

Old Nora sank back in her seat, trembling with emotion. Her unexpected departure from her usual composure startled every one. Always quiet and agreeable in her remarks, as she sat beside the mistress of “The Glen,” she had been respected and admired for her age and her appreciation of whatever commended itself to the learned and refined.

Some secret spring of tenderness had been touched regarding young Rutherford, and every one at the table sympathized

with her, except Nicholas Traver, and the young gentleman in lemon. The former hated her because he was irrevocably in her power. His character rested upon her silent tongue. Mr. Fred. Cutaway hated her on principle. He considered everything old and venerable as a bore; and with persons of his stamp a bore is a criminal.

Several persons indulged in remarks calculated to soothe the old nurse, but Marie Heron and Mary Delavan remained silent and listening. The latter looked uneasy and nervous, making several abortive efforts to balance her spoon upon the rim of her coffee-cup, and then turning to the gentleman next her, with apparently interested remarks as to persons who would suffer by the closing of the principal bank of the town. Her brother was also annoyed by the name of Judge Holden's discarded son being introduced. He knew the young man well—too well, to allow his sense of propriety to remain undisturbed when his name was alluded to. He had gone along with the great wave of public opinion which discarded the outcast from society, but he had a conscience like his sister Mary. It was a hard thing to ignore the existence of a friend whirling in the eddy of cruel fate.

But Marie Heron, the beautiful girl with the hidden passion gnawing at her heart, what were her thoughts at this sudden fall of her idol from his young career of fame? The upward flight of the young eagle had gladdened her heart, though that heart was destined to exist alone—unnoticed—uncared for by *him*. Her pride in his success continued when hope tolded its wings and lay down to pine and die. He would be great, honored—worshipped of men, when her eyes were growing dim and her hands refining a way for the grave. It would be so sweet to know that his great heart and his clear intellect would be acknowledged of men—his worth would be recognised on earth when she was gone to the silent home under the sods of the valley. But this great shock almost paralysed her. She saw nothing, heard nothing, for a few seconds after the reading of the dreadful

news. Everything appeared to swim about her. She grasped at her coffee and drank it at a draught. Then the words of encouragement to Nora, from the guests about her, attracted her notice. She saw there were opportunities, means—men who might save him. He was innocent. He could be assisted to prove it. Effort—sacrifice of comfort in his behalf—might save him. She would consider it. If any one should help him, it must be herself. Why? If any one could save him, she must be that one. Why? Love has its own logic. Perfect and self-existent, it aims towards its object. For it no modesty that can hinder action exists. Pride melts in the grasp of true love. It demands no love in return as a condition of its existence and growth. It can flourish alone; hidden, crushed out of sight, it burns into the heart and strongly lives. It is the only love worth having—the love which heeds not unkindness, slight, poverty, crime; but closer and closer, still clings to its idol. Is the beauty and sublimity of a mother's love to be denied, though it is centred in a son who wears a felon's chain? Never! Has she a right to love one whom men loathe or fear? Aye, the instinct of men asserts the truth. Then why is a girl's love to be scorned, which goes forth from her towards any man? Love is sacred. God planted it in the human heart, that reason might not burn and destroy utterly by its iron mandates. Pure reason, as the sole principle of human action, would make the hearts of men such rocks of pride and conceit, that the gallant ships Sublimity, Beauty, and Self-Sacrifice, would dash upon them and go down for ever. Thank God, this love of woman is not limited to that only which is easy, approved of by society, and respectable! She can love without return; and where her heart has been once centred, there she lives and dies. This is not that which often bears the resemblance of, and is called love. True love never dies.

Yes, she loved him. She yearned to help him, only because she loved him. No hope lighted her path, and in the darkness of despair she moved on to help him. Perhaps after

she was dead and gone, he would learn to love her grave. Perhaps he would forget that she had ever lived. What matter? She listened eagerly to the conversation which sprang up around her? She tried to catch every word that related to knowledge of law and the evidence which courts of justice admit. She knew the unerring certainty with which the instinct of women sometimes darts to conclusions of truth. She had discussed such questions with Rutherford himself. Therefore she cared not for the shrewd speculations of the female talkers about her. She felt that her own sense as a woman was perfectly as accurate and clear as any one present. It was what Mr. Delavan and Mr. Traver would say of the trial for robbery. They had studied the law, and knew the rules of evidence. She desired to know something practical, something that men would feel and say; for into the hands of men had Rutherford, her idol, fallen. Men were to try and decide his case, and she listened eagerly to what men would say. She noticed that Charles Delavan, when he entered into the discussion at last, appeared to understand what he was talking about. And Mr. Traver, her right-hand attendant, when he was forced at last into the conversation, explained his knowledge of law so clearly that she encouraged him to talk, and soon found out that the discovery of the money in Rutherford's possession, and his grey suit, were the two facts against him. The accused must be able to account satisfactorily how the stolen money happened to be in his hands, or some other person in a grey suit must be identified in connexion with the robbery. The night-watch did not, it appeared, see Rutherford's countenance, but only one man in a grey suit. He could tell nothing about the face of this man.

Presently Mrs. Baltimore and old Nora retired from the table together, and left the room in some secret discussion. Marie felt that it must relate to the young man in prison. She knew Nora would commence operations in his favor at once. Oh, that she might be taken into their confidence.

She determined to watch every opportunity to secure evidence in Rutherford's favor. God only could tell what a woman's heart might accomplish. With these reflections, she left the dining-hall in company with Nicholas Trayer. He was the sensible man and lawyer to devote herself to now.



CHAPTER XXV.

TICK, tick, tick. How mournfully sounded the deserted clock in the silent room. Darkness enveloped all things. The night was gloomy. The stars of heaven were shrouded. The stars of Hope had vanished, too. Over the earth a pall of blackness hung. Over the hearts of some the more fearful veil of despair was flung. The young eagle was chained. The captive pined in darkness, and thought hopelessly of the morrow. No doubt the morrow would witness deeper shame—the un pitying gaze of men, the staring crowd of vulgar intellects, the cruel sentence from the judge, the clank of fetters, and the dreary journey to the convict's cell. Of what avail had effort been? How had the honest purpose and the manly struggle been rewarded? Weary nights of toil, and overworking of the brain; the sacrifice of self by day, and the earnest call on God by night, had only led to shame. Was the arm of God shortened, that it could no longer save?

Tick, tick, tick. The faithful clock stood lonely and forsaken, and yet its duty, the everlasting tick, went on. The fire had long ago smouldered and gone out upon the hearth. Beside the ashes stood the kettle, long neglected. Beside the table stood the vacant chair. The bed was long unopened, and beneath the pillow lay the locket, long ago unclasped. And would the faithful monitor thus hold on for ever, with its tick, tick, tick, regardless of the presence or absence of

its owner? No! In the dark and silent night, and unattended by the hand of man, the old clock sounded its last alarm. The cathedral chime struck *twelve*, and all was still.

The captive's sole companion in his earnest struggles for fame had ceased to sound the tick, tick, tick, and Time was marked no more. Perchance the evil ones who roam the earth on spirit-wings came in and jeered at God and Virtue.

In a distant street of the same town stood a building of stone. Its exterior was gloomy, and its interior more gloomy still. Children were wont, as the shades of evening fell, to look up with awe and wonder to its grated windows, and the strange faces which looked forth between the bars. Sometimes an arm could be seen hanging partly exposed to view as a prisoner thrust it through the bars, and listlessly looked forth upon the setting sun. Murderers were known to be confined there and all the hideous brood of mortality that live upon the plunder and the ruin of their fellow-men. And when the merry children passed the place a chill fell over their hearts, and they would lower their voices as they spoke of the dreadful men, and women even, who passed their days and nights within those dismal walls, and all uncheered, unblessed by the presence of their kindred.

A flight of stone steps under the front entrance of the prison led to an area below. From this area, a door of oak, heavily bound by wrought-iron plates, opened into the basement of the building. This door was secured on the outside by two immense bolts, in addition to the iron key which the jailor carried about with him. The basement was divided by stone partitions into a hall with cells on either side. These apartments were designed for the safe keeping of criminals who were possessed of extraordinary strength, and the windows were fortified by grates of double bars. The doors were all of wrought iron. Without the aid of files, it seemed impossible for prisoners to escape, unless they could succeed in surprising and throttling the jailor when he came to bring them food, or to inspect the condition of their cells.

On each side of the building where the windows of these cells looked out, a huge mastiff was chained by a long chain, and taught to prowl back and forth, and give the alarm if any one approached or attempted to leave the windows of the basement. The cells were well calculated to prevent the escape of prisoners of ordinary skill and cunning. There is a class of desperadoes whose skill and patience are equivalent to genius. For these men the basement might have been insecure. But for ordinary purposes of a county jail, it was regarded as unusually strong.

In one of these cells the unfortunate Rutherford was confined, and for some unaccountable reason was chained also. Party spirit outside claimed that this unusual severity was occasioned by political hate. The young lawyer had become a power in the canvass. In the midst of a career in oratory which threatened to annihilate the forces of the opposition, this arrest had fallen upon him like a shock of lightning. He was walking towards his little home at night, when a man passed him upon a full run, as if eager to reach a physician's office. He supposed this to be the fact until he had walked half a block further. Then he was surprised by the discovery of a bundle of papers lying upon the sidewalk in the light of a street lamp. Stooping to examine the papers, he discovered that they were bank-bills of large denominations. The thought then flashed to his mind that the man on the run must have dropped them. He took up the bundle and went on his way, studying in his mind the best method of advertising the finding of the money, that the owner might come forward and claim it. In a few seconds after taking possession of the bills he was suddenly pounced upon by two of the town police, who came in upon him from the darkness of a side street. He did not know them, and indignantly denied their charge of robbery, and stated the facts as they had occurred. They replied roughly to this denial, and carried their prisoner with the money before a magistrate, who finally committed him to prison. Being a

political partisan of a bitter stamp he refused to take bail for the prisoner's appearance, and no subsequent efforts of Mrs. Baltimore or Rutherford's friends could shake this purpose of holding the suspected burglar securely for trial.

The young lawyer found no difficulty in securing counsel to defend him. Three of the ablest men in his profession volunteered their services at once. His friends insisted upon his employing them all, as the matter was rapidly assuming a political complexion. There were very grave apprehensions that he would not be allowed justice. The dominant party might succeed in packing a jury for the trial; and in that event nothing could save him, as the Governor of the State was also a bitter partizan of the opposition. Under these unfortunate circumstances Rutherford found himself pressed down on the gloomy night preceding the day of his trial. A crowd of friends had visited him in his cell from time to time. In one party came the Rev. Charles Heron and his daughter, Old Nora, and the mistress of "The Glen." Every encouraging word of cheer and sympathy was offered to him. Every comfort was furnished to him; and he received the assurance that half at least of the community regarded him as innocent and a martyr to political prejudice. His friends in the canvass gathered to him, and assured him that if he was condemned there was a strong disposition on the part of the people to attack the prison and raze it to the ground, and carry him out of harm's way. Rutherford, in reply to this intelligence of contemplated violence, stated emphatically that he would not acquiesce in violations of law and order, and that such violence would be immediately followed by his delivery of himself into the hands of the officers of the law. The more discreet of his political friends took care that this remark of the prisoner should be widely circulated, and its good influence upon the community was at once manifest. A man must be innocent that desires only a fair trial, and will have freedom on no other conditions.

But notwithstanding all the sympathy he received, the

facts were dreadfully against him. His own statement to the officers who made the arrest could be of no avail. The bank had been robbed, and half of the community had suffered by the closing of its doors. He was poor, reputed to be a bastard, wore a grey suit of clothes which had been seen by the night-watch, and was arrested with the money or a part of it in his possession, and was moving away from the bank in the very direction that the night-watch stated one of the robbers had gone. In his favor was only the fact that he had been reputed honest all his life—a weak barrier to hold back suspicion when the community are aroused and passionate in the midst of a great political struggle for power.

The venerable clergyman, whose son Rutherford had defended successfully in the trial for the murder of Walter Traver, was devoted and diligent in his efforts to aid the prisoner. He visited him and induced members of his church to go with him to the prison. He did everything that an honest and grateful heart could do, and after all went away to his home on the evening preceding the trial in very great depression of spirits, knowing too well the vindictive and stern prejudices of the party to which he himself belonged. He felt assured that if the jury should by any chance or connivance of the officers of the law all prove to be political partisans of strong prejudices, the acquittal of the accused was beyond the bounds of probability. The removal of Rutherford from the scene of the canvass would be very like sounding the death-knell of the political organization to which he belonged, and which had rallied to him as their chief support in the campaign.

The three gentlemen who were to act as his counsel in the approaching trial visited him just before nightfall; and after promising to exert themselves for his acquittal as never men had exerted themselves before, they proceeded to express to him candidly their apprehensions that the opposition party would succeed, through the officers of the law, in

securing a list of jurymen who would act in the interest of prejudice rather than the interest of justice. They advised him to be prepared for every emergency, and to conduct himself boldly and manfully even in the event of a conviction, trusting to after-events that should be arranged to secure his pardon. With this candid statement of their opinions, they cordially bade him adieu for the night, and he was left to the solitary reflections of his lonely cell.

He sat for a long time on the little bench which had been left him for a seat, with his face buried in his hands. It seemed as if his throbbing heart would break with chagrin and shame. Once soaring so high in ambition and heroic purpose, securing the respect of men, and crowned with wreaths of hope for a bright future; and now cast into a felon's cell, chained, and of many men regarded as a criminal—a monster of humanity, whose freedom was dangerous to the peace and happiness of society. It seemed as if fate, for him, had no alleviating cup of joy. An outcast from the home of his childhood, without a relative, without a name which could connect him with an honorable ancestry, with every prospect of success torn from him, and the convict's toilsome life before him, why should he live? Why had he failed to leap, as he had purposed, from the dizzy height of Stormcliff? Why need he longer bear the cross of effort and humiliation before men? Why not dash his brains out with the fetters which elung about his wrists? With his immense power of muscle that death would easily be attained. A few vigorous blows upon his head, and all would be over. He shuddered at the temptation; not that he feared death, but that he feared God, to whom he had solemnly vowed never to dwell upon the temptation of ridding himself of life when troubles came upon him. He shook off the dreadful thought, and rising to his feet in the darkness, said, resolutely: "But I am to succeed; the spirit of the highlands has said it." Then recalling words of his Creator, which Nora had read to him that day in the prison,

he kneeled down by his little bench and reverently repeated them aloud, with his eyes raised to Heaven, in the impenetrable gloom of his cell: "For the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them."

All night long did the watchful inmate of the cell meditate upon these words of Divine promise, and kneeling oft, offered his supplication to the throne where the upright and the honest can never pray in vain.

* * * * *

Morning, bright and beautiful, burst upon the darkness. The rays of its sceptre glanced over the houses of the town, glistened on the church-spire ornaments of brass, poured in through the windows of the prison, and fluttered even on the ceiling of the prisoner's cell. The day of horror for him had come; but oh, how mockingly beautiful! He sat for a long time on his bench watching the effects of daylight on his prison-walls. Higher and higher climbed the sun on the ladder of morning, brighter grew the day, and louder sounded the wheels of business on the streets of the aroused town. He counted the strokes of the town-clock as they told of the approaching hour of his trial—the hour when he must face the cruel glances of men, and be the shameful centre of pity or reproach. *He* face the suspicious countenances of men; he who had never known of crime but to condemn and shun it; he who had looked ever into the blue sky with honest eyes, and loved the stars, the pure stars, with an upright heart. It was hard that he should be called upon to march a prisoner through the halls of that stone-building, and then along the corridor which would usher him into the crowded court-room to be stared at as a criminal.

At last the jailor appeared. The key turned in the iron door and it swung back—the stern, powerful keeper stalking in gloomily, and placing the simple meal upon the brick floor. Silent, and with the cold air of one who feels that he is dealing with the villanous and the dangerous, the jailor examined the cell and the prisoner with suspicious looks.

His scrutiny of the young man appeared to surprise him, for he said bluntly :

“You look mighty calm and collected for one who will surely sleep in Sing-Sing prison before you are two days older. Is it possible that you are an old offender? You don’t look like the birds I’ve been used to keep under this key of mine. You’ve looked down-hearted like all the time till this morning. Now you look bright and cheerful. There’s no hope for you, young man, I can tell you.”

The prisoner arose like a young prince to his feet. His large grey eye was as calm and beautiful as the open eye of the eagle. He raised one hand with the clanking chain clinging to the wrist, and pointing upwards in majesty, burst forth :

“The hills of the highlands shall crumble and fall; the cliffs where my feet have climbed to watch the sunset, shall be ground in time to powder; but the great God of justice shall live and His word shall endure for ever. All night, jailor, I have knelt low there on the brick floor to a Father who loves His children, and whose word is the glance of destiny. I believe in Him, I trust in Him alone. Darkness has gathered thick about me. A pall hangs over my existence; but as surely as the God of Heaven answers prayer, so surely will that pall roll up like a scroll and vanish, and I shall walk forth free among the sons of men. I have knelt low *there*. To-morrow I shall be *up there*. Do you know the height of Stormcliff? Do you know where it hangs over the habitations of men, like the threat of Omnipotence? There will I stand and bless the name of the Adorable before to-morrow’s sun shall sink in the west. It is here—here deep in my heart, the blessed word of my God. He has heard my prayer; and before to-morrow’s sun shall set, Stormcliff shall be my footstool.”

He stood like a young prophet of faith, his manacled arm pointing upwards and away towards the cliffs of the river where he had struggled upwards to seek death, and where

Nora had saved him. A strange light burned in his eye, and the jailor feared he was going mad. The keeper expressed words of sympathy for him, and trusted he would prove to be innocent.

"Innocent!" burst from his lips. "Aye! I am innocent; and if God's promises shall stand, I will climb before to-morrow's sunset to the top of Stormcliff. Do you believe me, jailor?"

"No," was the reply, "I do not; for mortal man never trod that summit, and you know it."

"I shall be there," was the firm response. "Will you stand upon the cupola of this prison just before sunset to-morrow and watch the cliff? I will wave from its top a white banner, and with a good glass you will see it. I speak from faith in God."

"If you are free at that hour, I will look for your banner," replied the jailor, the conviction strengthening upon him that his prisoner was indeed losing his intellect.

"You will see it then floating against the blue sky," was the calm response, as the young man sat down and proudly smiled. He felt strong and sustained by faith in God, and the jailor left him with an ominous shake of the head, and the idea that his charge would soon be in a strait-jacket.

When the iron door was closed and locked upon him, Rutherford cheerfully and eagerly devoured his morning meal. He had slept none the previous night; but in answer to his earnest prayers, strength had come to him from above. The consciousness of his innocence, the favor of God, and the enthusiasm of his glorious destiny as a herald of Right, made his spirits buoyant, and he waited impatiently for the scenes of the court-room and the crowd.

Higher and higher and higher climbed the sun, but no jailor appeared to summon him to trial—no key grated in the lock—no footsteps sounded in the basement hall. Surely the appointed hour for the assembling of the court could not be far away. He could hear the tramp of men ascending

the wooden steps of the court-house, and distinctly the murmur of voices sounded in the prison yard. Approaching the window, he could see a great assemblage of people in the distance, apparently in a line with the front entrance of the temple of justice. But this crowd appeared to remain stationary, and seemed to make no headway towards the court-room. Could it be possible the halls of justice were full, and this was only the mass of outsiders unable to gain admittance ?

Higher and higher still ascended the sun, but no summons came for him. He grew impatient. He yearned for a trial. Would the opportunity of vindicating himself before men be denied him after all his suffering and confinement ? Why this long delay ? The hour for his trial had passed by. He knew it, for the clock of the town had slowly counted to him the fact. Another half-hour passed by, and still no jailor appeared. He walked again towards his window to look out upon the distant crowd. Something was surely agitating them, for the murmur of their voices grew louder, and they appeared to be divided asunder by some procession passing through them. The dividing party, whatever it might be, came from the direction of the court-house door, and was moving off. A part of the crowd followed it. It seemed to pass away in the distance. But a large concourse of people remained, and he could see that they were becoming much excited. Their voices sounded louder, and they swayed back and forth, and eagerly looked up towards the court-house. Some of them climbed to the top of gate-posts for a better view. The excitement evidently waxed greater, for he could see that many were climbing to the tops of sheds, and the roofs of houses even were becoming black with people. At last the cries of the aroused populace broke forth. He could not distinguish the words of their call. The roar of voices waxed louder. Ah ! he heard that fearful cry : "Bring him out ! bring him out !" He understood whom they called for, and he withdrew from the window to be

ready. Folding his manacled arms, he stood silently, anxiously looking towards the door of his cell. The jailor was coming. The grating of the key in the oaken door of the basement was heard. Then the tramp of many hurrying feet broke into the echoing hall of the prison, and the confused sound of voices. Many voices were at the door of his cell. The key grated in the iron door, and the door was flung open. A shudder passed over the prisoner. He must face a crowd in the court-room who suspected him of crime. He looked up at the open door. A dozen faces were regarding him, and each one radiant with joy.

"Huzza! Rutherford, you are free!" burst forth from the Rev. Charles Heron, as he darted in and grasped him first by the hand. A dozen hands grasped him on every side, and another voice shouted, half wild with joy: "Here, jailor, strike off these fetters. He's going into the keeping of the people now; hurry up."

A prolonged cheer resounded from the outside, followed instantly by the deafening report of a cannon from the public square near at hand.

"Come on, Rutherford," exclaimed the voice of a political friend, as the fetters fell to the floor. "The people are waiting for you on the square; the platform is built, and they expect you to speak. You remember, this is the day you promised to speak in this town."

The boom of the cannon again shook the prison, and the cheers of the populace thundered again from the square. The crowd about the court-house took up the cry, and when the liberators appeared ascending the steps from the area to the yard of the court-house, bearing the bewildered Rutherford on their shoulders, the people rushed about him with frantic cries of joy, and "Down with the opposition—the child of the people is free once more!" rang wildly out.

The bank robber in iron-grey had delivered himself up to the court, and the young orator of the highlands was free.

CHAPTER XXVI.

As Nora glanced towards the back seat of the carriage, she noticed that Mrs. Baltimore was utterly absorbed in listening. Her eyes were eagerly bent upon the speaker. Never before had the young widow appeared so perfectly oblivious to what was passing about her. Then she turned towards the Englishman on the seat beside her. Sir Francis Cleveland appeared to be equally interested in the utterances of the young orator. Even Fred. Cutaway, on the same seat with Mrs. Baltimore, looked as if the country was not so utterly "wooden" as he had imagined. Rutherford held even the "Caterpillar" spell-bound with his eloquence. There was something down deep in the essence of this conceited and shallow butterfly from the metropolis that could be stirred by the storm of sublimity and beauty which held so many thousands motionless in wonder and admiration. Oh! it was a glorious day for this new meteor of eloquence which had burst upon the world. Just free of the fetters of his dungeon, he answered the call of the people, and with the prestige of a political martyr who had suffered unnecessary rigor at the hands of the officers of the law, he mounted to the rostrum, and his whole soul burst forth in the cause he deemed right. Stormcliff had been his hall of practice. Alone, on the lofty crag accessible only to himself and Nora, he had practised oratory with the stars of heaven for his audience, and the voice of God for his prompter. He that strives to live near God will always be great. He that courts the Centre of Greatness must absorb some of its sparkles of fire and of power. Truth is more sublime than falsehood—rose-hued and crowned though it be—and power and inspiration to give it a hearing are gathered high among the eternal hills, where the soul communes more closely with its Creator. Corruption—the sale of offices created solely for the benefit of the people and the sacrifice of the public good for party

purposes and the interests of individuals—were the towers which the orator assailed; and as he thundered at them, they trembled and fell. He swept the hearts and the brains of the people with him, and the cause he had espoused then and there was won. He descended from the platform amid such shouts of praise and such glistening of eyes as had never attested the truth of any cause. The crowd hurried him off, threatening to tear him to pieces with hand-shaking, and pushing him about, and the occupants of the carriage from "The Glen" saw him no more. Nora looked eagerly, triumphantly, at Mrs. Baltimore. The young widow was pale with excitement, and her eyes glistened with tears of enthusiasm as she turned to Sir Francis Cleveland:

"Isn't he splendid?"

"Yes, Mrs. Baltimore," was the frank reply of the Englishman, "he is the greatest man I have seen in America, if he is young."

"What's your opinion, Mr. Cutaway?" inquired she, turning to the silent Caterpillar. That young gentleman in lemon, with the lemon-colored beaver mounted upon his head, looked fondly at his yellow gloves, and after adjusting them more satisfactorily at the ends of the fingers, replied in his high key:

"In candor, I must state, Mrs. Baltimore, that if by some rude shock of earthquake, or by some conflagration—some vulgar conflagration—the city should be destroyed, and I should be forced to take refuge in the vulgar country, and none of the elegant troupe of dramatic artists should escape destruction, I might feel inclined to approach this young orator for the purpose of securing an hour's dramatic entertainment. He is surely a temporary Lethe for ennui."

"I should think he was," was her amused reply; as the carriage moved off through the dissolving crowd.

The shouts of the people, as they followed Rutherford off to some place of public entertainment, arose occasionally upon the air. But after awhile they grew faint in the dis-

tance, and the occupants of the carriage found greater facility in making their way along the street. Many persons, however, recognised the saviour of their town, and cheered her as her carriage passed them. Just as the vehicle was about to turn into a side street to secure a clear way for the drive homewards, the Rev. Charles Heron made his appearance on the sidewalk, and Mrs. Baltimore directed the driver to stop the horses until she could speak to him. The clergyman met the carriage at the street-curb, and raising his hat, said :

“I hope you have enjoyed the speaking to-day as much as I have. I saw you in the distance, but the crowd was so great I could not get anywhere near you. Rutherford has made his mark to-day ; and I hear already that the people are demanding that he shall be nominated at the caucus to-night as the candidate for the Legislature. His speech has probably secured him the nomination. If he is elected, there will be a rattling among the dry bones of our State Assembly ; mark my words.”

“I hope he may, indeed,” was the fervent response of the mistress of “The Glen.” “I never heard such effective imagery in my life. I can understand now how he has won the sobriquet of *Golden-Lip*. That wonderful mouth is wonderfully sweet when he descends to persuasion. But when he denounces, that mouth is the cave of thunderbolts. But where is Marie ? It is not possible that she has missed this treat. I expected to see her with you.”

“What can you mean ?” exclaimed the clergyman. “Did she come with you from ‘The Glen ?’ ”

“Certainly not,” was the surprised answer. “She left for home last evening. She said urgent business demanded her presence at home ; and though I urged her to remain, she would not consent. So, at her request, I sent her to town in my phaeton, accompanied by my father. He returned last night and stated that he had parted with his charge at a dry-goods store where she desired to be left. Is it possible

you have not seen her? You alarm me. She should have been at home by eight o'clock last evening, at the furthest."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed the father, "what has become of my child? Gone all night, do you say?"

"Why, certainly," replied Mrs. Baltimore. "What time was it, Nora, when father started home with her?"

"It was six o'clock last evening," replied the old nurse. "I heard Miss Heron say to him upon starting, that she wished to be left at Benjamin West's dry-goods store; there would be time to do some shopping before she went home. If I were in your place, Mr. Heron, I would go to Mrs. Cranch's. She probably went there on her way home, and was persuaded by Mary to stay all night."

"No, no!" said Mr. Heron, his alarm increasing; "she would not stay there half the day. It is nearly one o'clock. She may be sick. That would detain her. I will go at once, for it is so unlike Marie's way of acting. Why did she leave you, Mrs. Baltimore? There was no earthly reason for her doing so that I know of."

"Indeed I cannot tell, Mr. Heron. She looked low-spirited and depressed for several days. She would not acknowledge it to me, but endeavored to shake it off when she saw that I noticed it. I sincerely trust you will find her at Mrs. Cranch's. Get in here with us, and we will drive there at once."

The anxious father accepted the invitation, and the driver urged his fleet steeds along the street. Arriving at the dwelling of Marie's friend, the carriage stopped, and the footman leaping from the box, ascended the steps and rang the door-bell. A maid-servant answered the bell, and in reply to the inquiry, stated that Miss Heron had not been at the house. The clergyman in dismay announced his intention of seeing Miss Cranch himself. The carriage-door was opened for him, and he hastened up to the house. Summoning the young lady to the door by a startling message of Marie's absence, he was informed that his daughter had not

been seen by any of the Cranch family, and they all supposed her to be still a visitor at "The Glen."

"Come back to the carriage, Mr. Heron," called out Mrs. Baltimore; "we will drive you around to West's store."

Again the carriage was driven rapidly ahead, and in a few minutes they were whirled up in front of the designated shop. The proprietor was standing in the door gossiping with a neighbor, but when he saw the face of his most valuable customer in the carriage, he bowed low and advanced to meet her. Mrs. Baltimore did not alight, however, but anticipated the inquiry of the clergyman in her quick, nervous way when excited.

"Have you seen Miss Heron? Was she in your store last evening about seven or eight o'clock? She's missing, and her father is very anxious about her. Did my father drive her to your store last evening in the phaeton?"

"Oh, yes!" was the bland reply of the serene man of trade, as he bowed respectfully to the different members of the party, and apparently unconscious as yet what a valuable customer for the display of his dress-goods had vanished from the community." "The young lady was here, madam, last evening and made several small purchases. She was left here by your father. I offered to send her little bundle home for her; but no, she would take it herself." The alarmed countenances of his audience seemed to check the serene flow of his spirits, for the smile gave place to a serious look as he inquired: "Did she not go directly home? It was quite dark when she left the store. I do not recollect ever to have seen Miss Heron out so late and unattended before: I told her so; but she only smiled, and said it was only a short walk home."

"Could she have gone to Mrs. Crandall's?" inquired Nora.

The clergyman shook his head sorrowfully. The disappearance of his only child overwhelmed him. "She never goes there to spend the night, Nora. She is lost or mur-

dered. Oh, Marie, my child, where shall I look for you?"

"Go to the police-office," said the Englishman, bluntly.

"The Chief of Police," put in the high key of the gentleman in lemon. "He'll telegraph all over town."

"What use would a telegraph be in a town like this?" said the Englishman, gruffly.

The Caterpillar shrank into himself and volunteered no more suggestions, but sat meekly smoothing on his yellow gloves. The proposition of the Englishman was adopted, and the clergyman was driven around to the office of a police justice. The magistrate was found lolling on a bench before his office, and smoking a pipe. He was a thin, wiry-looking man, evidently elected by the people, and responsible only to the devil for the administrative integrity of his position. Corrupt times are easily recognisable by a glance into the faces of local magistrates. The simple, honest face of the farmer-justice is replaced by a countenance of cunning, warmed with other men's whiskey. The justice honored his visitors by straightening his legs, when he saw that the party looked equal to stimulative donations in the interest of justice. But soon ascertaining that the principal party interested in the recovery of the young lady understood thoroughly the duties of magistrates, and reserved the excess of his purse for suffering humanity, he promised to interest the police in the search, and then relapsed into the lolling position to which the people had elected him.

"He looks like a blood-sucker," said the Englishman, as they drove away. "That man won't do a thing, I predict."

"I expect little of him," said the clergyman. "I shall advertise my child in the papers. I cannot express to you all my anxiety. Please leave me at the next corner; I wish to see the editor of the evening paper. You have all been so kind to me in my anxiety—may God bless you all. Here is the place I wish to get out. Yes, that corner."

The carriage drove up to the sidewalk again; and bidding them farewell, he walked away in terrible anxiety and distress. Alone in the world, every affection of his heart had twined around Marie. She had been his sole idol since the death of his wife; and now to lose her, with such frightful possibilities surrounding her disappearance, nearly drove him frantic. He hurried on towards the office of the evening paper. In passing the post-office he recollected that he had not yet called for the mail of the day. He entered the office and inquired for his letters. They were handed to him. Lo! one of them was addressed to him in his daughter's handwriting. He tore the letter open, and his amazed eyes read thus :

“MY DEAR FATHER :

“I drop this note into the office myself. I am going to leave, and my heart is almost broken at the thought. You have trusted me implicitly always, and this fact renders it so hard to take the important step without consulting you. I know you would persuade me from the step I am about to take; you would oppose me utterly. And this is the one great occasion of my life when I cannot be thwarted. No! I cannot. And yet I look back to you in your loneliness and desolation with feelings of anguish which you must believe in because your Marie assures you she suffers from them. I cannot consult you, because you would oppose me; and my heart is so utterly and absolutely enlisted in my departure, that my very existence depends upon it. I must go, and you must be left in the darkness of suspicion regarding me. I may return; but, alas! I feel that a long, long time may elapse before I shall be in your arms again. Forgive me and pray for me, for I am very unhappy. Don't advertise me, I beg of you; it will only cause reproach to attach to my name, and will do no good. I cannot be tracked. I have taken every means that human ingenuity could suggest to avoid being followed. You cannot find me; and I beg of

you patiently to await my return in silence, though my absence should extend to years. You will, I hope, be satisfied at last with your poor lost daughter

“MARIE.”

The note was crushed convulsively in his hand, and blinding tears came to his eyes. He knew then that she had eloped; but who in the name of mercy had enticed her away? Who had borne away that inestimable treasure of his home, and for what conceivable motive could she have eloped without trusting him? Would he not have given his consent to her marriage with any man who was master of her heart, and who was not irreclaimably evil and abandoned? She knew that he would, and still had she fled. He wandered up and down the streets of the town unconscious of human presence on the walks. He wandered until near nightfall, mourning and meditating upon her note. Then he went to his desolate lodging-place, and shut himself up in his room, and kneeling beside his table, murmured: “Thy holy will be done.” After a long time of prayer he arose, and his purpose was fixed. In the first place, he would dispatch a note to the mistress of “The Glen,” stating that he had a letter from his daughter, and requesting the courtesy of Mrs. Baltimore’s silence until his child should return. He would request her, if possible, to close the lips also of her guests. In the second place, he would follow Marie’s request, and raise no alarm regarding her mysterious absence; but wait patiently her return, when the difficulties attending her should be cleared from her path. He proceeded, in pursuance of this resolution, to address a note to Mrs. Baltimore and another to the police justice; one to Mrs. Cranch, and one to the keeper of the dry-goods store. If they could not keep the strange secret, he would feel at least that he had obeyed his child’s last request. Having finished the notes, he went out into the street to deliver them himself, or to find messengers trusty

to bear them to their destination. He found a boy in whom he had great confidence, and sent him off on horseback to "The Glen." The persons for whom the other notes were intended he was successful in finding at home; and to them he explained that his daughter had written him a letter, and there was no further necessity of following the matter up. Having fulfilled this sensible mission, he returned to his desolate and deserted home at the private boarding-house, to seek consolation in the promises of God.

While Mrs. Baltimore and her friends were enjoying themselves in the town, and listening to the oratory of Rutherford, the servants at "The Glen" were holding high revel. Every guest was absent upon some party of pleasure, and no one remained in the mansion but the domestics. There was no one to restrain their hilarity, and they roved through the gardens of the place and around the park. Some of them chased after the deer, which had been secured for the property in the wilds of the North, enjoying their fright as they bounded away under the trees. Some roamed through the gardens, and compelled the old gardener to desist from his work, telling him that there was no mistress upon the place, and they were determined there should be no work either until there should be signs of Mrs. Baltimore's return. The old man was forced to acquiesce, for his tools were hidden from him; and determined to make the most of his forced holiday he found his way into the house, and wandered up and down its rooms, enjoying a glimpse of its rare decorations and the elegant works of art which had arrived from Europe. In the course of his wanderings he entered the ancient parlor of the front building, and recollecting the disappointment he had experienced upon his former visit to it, when accompanied by the mistress of "The Glen," he could not forbear taking another look at the family portraits from which the gem of them all had been removed. What was his amazement, upon throwing open the shutters and admitting light to the room, to discover the lost portrait of

Gertrude Baltimore restored to its place upon the wall. There it was, sure enough, with its quaint look, cap and tassels, and all. He shaded his eyes with his hand, as was his wont when he wished great accuracy of vision, and took a good look at the ancient lady, whose memory had been revered by his father with a devotion due to a goddess. Could it be possible that his old eyes were failing him so fast! He rubbed them with his wrinkled and weather-beaten hand and took another look. A low whistle of surprise escaped him. Then he looked around to see that he was not followed by any of the domestics. That glance satisfied him that he was entirely alone. He approached the portrait and scrutinized it carefully. Then he exclaimed aloud:

“Well, well, well! if that don’t beat all the queer things this old man ever saw. It’s her, and it aint her. It’s the Lady Gertrude, and then agin it ain’t. What the botheration has happened to the old lady? I know the livin’ changes beyond knowin’ sometimes; but may old Weaver be shot for a hiecenee, if he ever seen a black eye change into a grey eye afore. It’s past the laws of natur. And the eye is shaped, too, as it never were afore. It’s kind o’ squeezed out and stretched. How kin that be?—how can that be? It’s the lady herself; but she’s stole some other woman’s eyes, or some other woman has stolen hern.”

The old man stood in every favorable position that he could think of to secure the most favorable light upon the picture, still fancying that his eyes must be playing him false, and that all would come right at last. It was all in vain, however. He shook his old head, and muttered: “It’s her; and then agin it ain’t her.”

Finally, after a long discussion with himself, he ejaculated:

“What a stupid thing old Weaver’s a gettin’ to be. I understand it; of course I do.”

With the last exclamation he thrust his hand up and out-

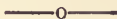
wards before him, as a gesture of final and irrevocable certainty, and repeated: "Of course I do. It's Nora's doin's, and I jest know it. O my! but isn't she cunnin'? The pictur is there; but it might jest as well have a mask onto it. I can't dispute the pictur; no, sir, that I can't. But who'll know the face 'ceptin' some such old critter as me? That's what I want to know. My fine lady Gertrude has gone and got strange eyes onto herself. I'll bet Nora went and painted the eyes over herself. She kin do that thing. But O my! ain't she crafty?"

One of the servants came rushing into the house, shouting: "Weaver! Weaver! you old rascal; hurry out, the mistress is comin'. Her carriage is a'most up to the porter's lodge."

The old gardener stole quietly out of the house and found the servants flying in every direction, to be back in their proper places for the arrival of the young widow. He walked out to his post in the garden green-houses, muttering to himself:

"I respect Nora, that I do. She means well, and she is a faithful soul; but O my! ain't she cunnin'?"

The carriage of Mrs. Baltimore was just on the point of entering the park, when a boy on horseback rode up to the porter's gate, and, attracting her attention, delivered to her a note. She glanced her eye over the contents, and, seeing that it required no answer, sent the boy back to the town. Then, as the carriage rolled along the avenue of the park, she explained to her companions the wishes of the Rev. Charles Heron regarding the note from, and the disappearance of, his daughter.



CHAPTER XXVII.

A YEAR passed by and no further word came to the lonely clergyman of his lost daughter. Whether she slept beneath the sods of the earth, or dragged out a life of weariness, or

rejoiced in the love of one worthy of her pure heart's devotion, he knew not. To him she was as one dead. The new dwelling, in which he had anticipated so much joy with Marie, was finished. The plans of the new house had been made by her own hands. Every convenience, every comfort which she had advocated, was secured in its construction. He had furnished every room as she had indicated, in the tenderness of his love and hope that she would yet return. But at last he gave himself up to the belief that she was so involved in secret troubles that she could not return. He even prayed to God as if his all was now gathered in Heaven, and he had only to wait patiently his own summons to the "Better Land."

Society only shook its wise head now when Marie's name was mentioned, and regretted that so much loveliness and so much talent should have been so easily led astray. No doubt, she had run off with some sudden and romantic object of attachment; but who that object could have been was the great mystery for the town. No one was missing, no one had gone away from the town; and therefore she must have eloped with some gentleman whom she had met upon her visits elsewhere. Miss Louise Stanford, who had formerly considered it her great vocation in life to be the grand bearer of intelligence to the neighborhood of Marie's daily conduct, contented herself now with raids upon young females generally. Her specialty had fled beyond the reach of her keen eyes, and she only said of her now: "Romantic people always end like that unfortunate Marie Heron. Poor girl, if she had only remained constant to Mr. Rutherford, how happy it might have been for her. He is a member of the Legislature; is gaining distinction in his profession; is becoming very popular in society; and if this terrible stigma of his birth could only be removed, how sweet he would be."

The qualified character of this last statement was quite a fair index of the young lawyer's actual position in society. His marvellous success had planted him just half way in and

half way out of society. By some families of the "*highest respectability*," he was received and courted unqualifiedly. By others, he was still held in probation, for other and further approving nods of the modern Jove—fashion. The novel which had occasioned such a sensation in literary circles, "*Oloffe, the Dreamer*," was now believed to have emanated from his little office by the river. Who else could the lady friend have been but Mary Delavan? Had she not deserted him upon his rejection by the will of Judge Holden? And had she not returned into his circle of friends when the superb and wealthy Mrs Baltimore took him up, and placed him high on her list of intimates? What woman in the town was ignorant of these facts? What woman did not know that the mistress of "*The Glen*" contrived to have a pressure of legal business since Rutherford had become her lawyer? Who was ignorant that Nicholas Traver, notwithstanding the young lawyer had opposed him in the murder trial, now, through the influence of his daughter, gave him several important matters to litigate for him? Did he not ride to the gloomy and mysterious estate when no one else could gain admittance? Had he not stood beside Nicholas Traver in the mysterious parlor of that doomed property, when the lightning descended the chimney and tore up the planks of the floor within ten feet of them? Everybody knew this; and everybody was aware also that Nicholas Traver appeared anxious to have the lawyer with him when storms threatened from the skies. It was said that the strange, elegant man had a superstitious confidence that Rutherford's presence protected him from destruction by the electric fluid. A stranger rumor still was gaining credit among the crowd. Within the year, the old prophetess had fallen into her trances again; and in one of them, as report gave the whisper, she had testified vaguely that Nicholas Traver had been the cause of Marie Heron's mysterious disappearance; whether he had murdered her, or how he had disposed of her, after his last ride with her in the phaeton, was not

defined accurately by the marvellous dame of tea-parties. It was enough to know that the trance referred to it, and Nora's trances never lied. When this terrible addition had become recently a part of the mystery fund of the town, it seemed as if the maw of curiosity would be stretched to its utter destruction. Who was the strange being that uttered prophecies, and held the steward's key of the young widow's unbounded wealth? Who was Rutherford, the brilliant and the rising sun? Why had Nicholas Traver sacrificed his daughter Grace to the arms of the aged Baltimore; and why had her old nurse been forbidden access to the mysterious marriage? Who had murdered the brother of Mrs. Baltimore, and still ranged the earth unpunished? What was the venerable clock willed to the outcast for? And where was Marie, the beautiful and the fawn-footed?

While these questions were renewed in the autumnal months, and the dreamy wand of October commenced its gorgeous transformations of the oaks and maples of "The Glen," the town was electrified by cards of invitation which fell like autumn leaves within its limits. The young widow had laid aside her mourning, and the ancient halls of the Baltimore estate were to be thrown open for a grand masquerade-ball. The excitement was unprecedented in the circles of fashion. Such wonderful stories of the improvements and decorations of "The Glen" had gone abroad through the county, such extravagant descriptions of the wealth and grandeur of the young widow had been circulated, that an invitation to the great entertainment was looked upon with delight, and the most expensive and elaborate toilets to personate the royal and the great were everywhere in course of preparation. A note accompanied every invitation to the effect that Mrs Rudd alone would remain unmasked; and it was expected as a matter of courtesy and precaution that every one would, upon entering the house, pass into the apartment designated and unmask before her, previously to joining the revel. No one

more competent could have been selected for the purpose of limiting the entertainment to only the invited guests. The entire house was to be thrown open for the masqueraders, and two splendid bands of music were secured from the metropolis to facilitate dancing in the old and new buildings of "The Glen."

When the momentous evening of the ball arrived, the whole town appeared to be thronged with carriages driving up to the doors of the fashionables for the splendidly attired guests who had such a long ride before them to reach the scene of the entertainment. From the private residences, also, through the county, vehicles were hurrying forward to the revel, filled with personages attired in scarlet and velvet, in royal robes and crowns; white and scarlet plumes dancing in the light of the carriage lamps, and diamonds glistening in the powdered hair of the olden time. Upon arriving at the porter's lodge of "The Glen," the revellers discovered an arch of colored lamps suspended high above the gate-posts, and beneath them was an illumination in scarlet letters of the word "*welcome*."

From the entrance-gate to the door of the mansion the entire avenue was radiant with colored lamps suspended from the trees—some twining upwards around the ancient oaks like vines with many-colored fruits, others suspended across the avenue in festoons above. Banners of the olden time fluttered from the branches of the trees, with their heraldic devices of crowns and lions' heads and stags and the Crusaders' cross of red. As the carriages came pouring up along the avenue the occupants caught glimpses through the trees of some great brilliancy ahead. But only upon whirling around into the sweep of the great open circle in front of the house was the real splendor of the scene made manifest. The whole mansion was illuminated from top to bottom in yellow fire. The great dome of the old building was one mass of scarlet lamps, like a huge sun setting in a sea of gold. And beyond the mansion

towards the pine-bordered glen, the eye caught glimpses of the garden walks, brilliantly lighted in various colors.

The stirring music of the dance was already inviting to revelry and mirth, and the blended music of the two bands in the distinct buildings echoed far away under the trees of the park. The entrance through the ivy-wreathed porch of stone was guarded by four servants in the armor of Crusaders, and each holding aloft a flaming torch. These guardians of the entrance admitted but one carriage party at a time, who passed in under an arch of green-house flowers, and were conducted to the side apartment opposite the parlor of family portraits, where each unmasked before old Nora, who stood there, calm and tall and dignified, and bowing recognition as the disguise was for a moment removed from the face. The approved guest then resumed the mask, and was pointed away to the parlors and halls by another servant in armor, who wore a scarf of red silk and acted as usher, calling out in a loud voice the historic titles of the new comers as they passed in. As the maskers entered the parlor of family portraits they found the room brilliantly lighted and festooned with fresh flowers. Passing thence into the great drawing-rooms of the old house, they found a band of music upon a dais two feet high festooned with flowers. Huge mirrors were arranged at the extremities of these drawing-rooms, which gave the appearance of rooms twice their actual length, and reflected back the images of other cavaliers and ladies whirling in the dance. The music from this band distinctly met the ears of the dancers in the great circular dining-room under the dome, from which the circular table had been removed, and the memorial city of silver carried to a place of honor in the hall which connected the old and new buildings. Passing through this hall, the guests arrived at a scene of beauty in the new buildings which resembled the dream-visions of fairy-land.

A single step gave ascent from the connecting hall to the

great colonnade which formed the grand hall of the new building. The floor was of polished marble of variegated colors. The rows of columns on either side, sustaining the galleries of the second story, were of snow-white marble, with Corinthian capitals. The rows of columns above them, sustaining the roof of the house, were similar in pattern and material, and between them the guests on the second floor could seat themselves and look down upon the dancers below. At intervals between the columns of the grand hall were pedestals sustaining the statues brought from Italy, the huge glass vases filled with sporting gold-fish, the exotic plants from the conservatories, and orange and lemon trees full of golden and yellow fruit. At the far end of this princely hall the marble steps curved upwards either way to the colonnade and rooms above. Upon the second floor, between two pillars of marble, was stationed the band, flooding the house with melody, and timing the steps of the revellers below. At every available point flowers were festooned, long lilies of white nodded over the heads of the dancers, and the rare exotics of scarlet and golden hue were arranged with lavish hand. The saloon, with its divans and fountain of mermaids, was a lounging-place for the romantic and the weary. No lamp-light illumined it, save that which streamed in through the arch from the grand hall; but the Venetian blinds were raised, and the moonlight, in the height of the revel, flooded into the apartment, and found unknown cavaliers in mask in secret converse with equally unknown queens and fairies in disguise. From the grand hall doors opened into apartments richly draped and ornamented in the semblance of oriental luxury or Roman and Grecian taste, where lovers or groups could retreat for quiet love or mirth.

In the second story of the old house, in the front, apartments were provided for the arrangement of disordered dress and hair, and where the maskers could assume new characters and costumes at will. So superbly were the arrangements of the revel conducted, that closets opening into

these apartments were filled with costumes and masks of every pattern, that the revellers might, if recognised, retire and change their dresses during the evening.

The revel was at its height. The clocks had been masked with folds of silk, that the heart of mirth might not be touched by the chilling hand of Time. Oblivion of care was the order of the night. The dancing waxed wilder, the music sounded more dreamily to the loungers in the saloons or gardens, the wine sparkled more freely in the hands of the revellers, eyes grew brighter in the intoxication of pleasure, feet tripped more buoyantly through the mazes of the dance, and care and sorrow were swept away from the hearts of the beautiful. Amid the disguises of that Lethean night, one had been conspicuous to all for its brilliant beauty and the graceful carriage of its wearer. The prince in scarlet and ermine, with the exquisite collar of point lace, and the long plume of white fluttering off from the scarlet velvet cap, was the most gallant and graceful dancer of the evening. His compliments, delivered with such insinuating tones of delicacy and tact, had caused many a blush to the unknown and unseen cheeks of the hearers. No offers to dance were accepted more willingly than his; no bows were more courtly, no steps more princely than his. Conjectures had been whispered repeatedly from lady to lady, but the scarlet prince remained a mystery still. Through all the flattery and the attentions lavished upon him by the female throng, he had never lost sight of his premeditated purpose of the night. He sought to identify one lady alone, to win her arm and to solve a mystery of her heart. In vain had he exhausted the arrows from the quiver of his intellect, and the golden words of art from his tongue. He could not identify her. He could not discover under any mask language of repartee and wit which should be the brilliant and familiar reply of her lips. She was unusually graceful, too, and that clue also had baffled his search. He had danced in every room, jested in every group, and promenaded with half the lady-masks in the house,

but all in vain. Nothing satisfactory as yet pointed out any female as the lady of his search. She might have walked with him, danced with him, and still have baffled him. He knew she was equal to this, had she recognised him and been so inclined. But he was unwilling to believe she had actually evaded him, gone from his society, yet unknown. Already by his superior wit he had discovered the identity of many ladies, and informed them of it, though remaining himself, through his admirable counterfeit of other gentlemen, still unknown. Where should he turn next? Where should he make another essay to find her? He stood silent, and thoughtful, and alone on the second marble step leading to the gallery above the dancing-hall, his scarlet cloak flung carelessly over one shoulder, and the point of his rapier resting upon the step just above the one on which he was keeping watch of the dancers. As his eye ranged over their heads, he saw a new-comer, apparently, at the end of the hall. She might be only a reveller in a new disguise. He ascended a few steps higher for a better view over the crowd, and then he was able to study the detail of her dress. It was the character of a priestess of the Pagan temple; flowing drapery of white, arranged admirably to display a waist of exquisite beauty, and one bare arm, moulded in snow. A wreath of green oak leaves circled her head, whose outline and hair was completely disguised by some white drapery she had gathered about it. She wore a mask of white silk. In her small, beautiful hand she grasped a sacrificial knife of her order. The attentive prince upon the steps muttered to himself: "That is just like one of her conceits. I'll wager my life against a boor's she is the lady of my pursuit. I would give up many an hour of joy to catch one glimpse of that costume minus the mask. That figure must be hers. It can be no other."

He left the stairway, and gradually made his way through the dancers to her side. Bowing gallantly, he said, in the disguised voice he had adopted for the evening:

"A priestess, if I mistake not. Does the law of your temple allow you to court the favor of Terpsichore?"

"Oh, yes," replied a voice he did not recognise. "Dancing can be made subservient to the worship of our goddess. In our holy rites we both sing and dance."

"But would you be allowed to dance with the crown prince of the realm?"

"Only in the interest of religion, and to further the cause of worship," was the response from beneath the white mask.

"Then I solicit the honor of your hand for the next dance. In it I shall be serving the goddess whom I adore. Pure worship urges me to solicit your hand for the dance. You are the divinity who has arisen upon my sight like a star of heaven. I would attend you and serve you."

"Spoken like a true devotee," said the white mask, with a clear, ringing laugh which he was unable to identify. "Your gallantry entitles you to favor. I will dance with you. I trust you are handsome, for the laws of our temple are limited to the beautiful." Again the ringing laugh followed.

"Please define your ideas of handsome and I can answer you more satisfactorily," said the prince.

"Well, listen," said the white mask. "The prince who can win my favor must have blue eyes."

"I have them to a certainty."

"Then his hair must curl."

"I can satisfy you in that respect."

"And you must have a small mouth."

"My mouth—my mouth," exclaimed the bewildered prince. "How can a man know that his mouth is small enough to satisfy a lady?"

"By raising his mask and giving her a glimpse of it," said the white mask.

"Mouth for mouth," said the prince, laughing. "Raise your mask sufficiently to satisfy me of the mouth of my goddess and I will do the same."

"You have no right to impose conditions upon a

goddess. I demand implicit obedience. Up with your mask."

"I will die first," exclaimed the prince.

"Now I know," said the lady, "that your mouth is large. You men are so conceited, that if you had a small mouth you would hasten to let it be known. I know you think your mouth is handsome—some foolish girls have told you so."

"I don't allow girls to tell me such things," said the prince. "I never hear any lady's voice but yours. It is so sweet and musical, it rings in my ears like a silver bell. I would only listen to you. One word from you in praise would thrill my heart."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the white mask. "How many girls have you said the same thing to within a year?"

"Not one," said the prince, emphatically.

"Don't think to deceive me," was the response. "Do you know what I have heard?"

"How could I?"

"Do you wish to know what I have heard?"

"Yes! indeed, only for the pleasure of hearing your sweet voice again."

"I heard that you had proposed marriage to three ladies within as many weeks."

The prince was uneasy under his disguise, for he made no answer. Then he said:

"If I had been guilty of such an act, my subjects ought to behead me. Indeed I feel affronted at such a charge."

"Don't write your own sentence. You should be beheaded sure enough, for you did it."

"If I could prove to you that it was a false charge, what would you do?"

"Follow you to the ends of the earth," said the white mask, with a deep sigh.

"I know you," said the prince, the sigh confirming his suspicion that it was the lady he had been looking for the whole evening.

"No! you don't," said the lady in a low tone.

"Yes! I do; and I love you better than any woman was ever loved before. Don't you think the instincts of my heart can tell me who you are?"

"Alas! if I could only trust you," sighed the lady again.

"Come with me—come with me," said the prince, energetically. "I have been looking for you, sweetest, the whole evening. I have had no enjoyment till this moment. Oh! how cruelly you have treated me for a whole year: snubbing me on every occasion—taking pride in exhibiting to strangers how much you despised me. And I see it all now, and I forgive you. Oh! Kate, how could you believe such a falsehood?"

"Hush!" said the white mask, "you will be overheard. Don't pronounce my name again."

"Then come with me," said the prince. "Never mind the next dance. We will walk in the gardens where no one can hear us. Will you go confidently with me once more?"

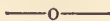
"I fear I had better not," said the white mask dubiously. "I do doubt you; but it is painful to me to do so."

"Go but for one moment. Go, I entreat of you. I will explain everything there."

"Well," said the lady, reluctantly. Then, as she took his arm, she said: "We had better go out through the connecting-hall, where I can get a shawl. I am not as strong as I was a year ago."

They passed out near the silver memorial of the burning city, after the white mask had secured a shawl which the prince flung over his arm. The night was brilliant with moonlight, and they concluded to leave the illuminations of the gardens behind them, and travel on towards the rustic bridge, hallowed in their minds by the strolls and associations of the last October which they had passed at "The Glen." The lady whispered once or twice in remonstrance, at the great distance he was conducting her from the mansion and from the masqueraders in the

gardens. He, however, prevailed upon her to go as far as the seats under the pines near the bridge, promising that their absence from the ball should not be prolonged beyond a quarter of an hour.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

“WHY don’t you drop that disguise of your voice? I know you, Kate Angier, perfectly well, and that tone can no longer deceive me,” said the prince, as they seated themselves on a rustic bench under the pines bordering the brook. The moonbeams fluttered through the dense foliage upon his companion’s white robe, and glistened from the sacrificial blade of steel she carried in her hand. She was silent for a few seconds. Then heaving a sigh, she said:

“I have several reasons why I choose to disguise my voice. In the first place, I am not certain that you really recognise me. In the second place, I wish to hear your confession. You have called me away from the dancers to satisfy me that you love Kate Angier. Suppose that I am not she, but Lucretia Rogers. What then?”

“Then I wish to make to Lucretia Rogers the declaration that I love Kate Angier better than any woman alive. That since my wife died I have never breathed love into the ear of any woman but Kate Angier, and that if I speak falsely I call upon the wrath of Heaven to destroy me.”

The white mask laughed heartily. There was the keenest vein of irony in her tone as she answered:

“You are a brave man. You have staked everything upon a single cast of the die, to win your purpose and secure love and confidence. Oh, what a fearless player you are?”

“I am no player, but an earnest man. I never have loved, I never can love any one but Kate Angier.”

The white mask laughed immoderately at the earnest tones of the prince. Controlling her merriment, she said:

"You are a prince, indeed, but it is the prince of humbug. You are incapable of a real love, such a love as a woman values. You have no more stability of purpose in regard to woman than a butterfly. It is whispered, moreover, that you are not a proper associate for ladies. Of course, you will call this slander and demand my authority. Such men as you always have a virtuous indignation at such charges being made against you, and demand authority, authority." She laughed bitterly, scornfully, her words stinging him like vipers.

"Well," said he angrily, "what would you have me do when such things are trumped up against me by bitterness and falsehood?"

"Admit their truth, and then hide yourself from the society of the upright," was the cool, contemptuous reply.

"Kate Angier, you are vindictive in the extreme. You deny justice to the innocent. Some day God may deny it to you."

"Ha, ha!" laughed his companion, "the infidel and the sceptic invokes Deity. How consistent you are! You who have built up a rival altar against the most High God. But I defy you," she added sternly, "to prove your innocence of these charges. Will you acknowledge your own handwriting when you see it, or will you pronounce it a forgery as all men like you invariably do?"

"Oh, Kate, how bitter you are. I will do anything to satisfy you that I am not altogether unworthy of you. Give me my handwriting; I demand it fearlessly."

"Will you promise upon your honor, or whatever quality you really do possess, that you will return it to me?—that you will not attempt to keep it from me, and that you will not attempt to destroy it?"

"I swear it!" said the prince, solemnly, confident that he had never committed himself on paper, and that notwithstanding the efforts and arts of the year before, which Kate Angier and Miss Rogers had employed, he could not be opposed with a single line of writing.

"Come, then," said the white mask, "out into the open moonlight. Can you read by moonlight?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Well, come on, then; and if you did not write what I have possession of, then Kate Angier—if I am she—will marry you."

"Kate, I am sure of you this time," said the prince, with an exultant air, as she took his arm and walked towards the gardens and the open moonlight.

Arriving at a favorable locality behind a garden hedge, where the eye could behold the moon sailing upwards in unveiled splendor, the priestess paused and thrust her hand into her bosom, and drawing forth a folded paper, handed it to the prince, and exclaimed:

"There! read that, and deny your handwriting if you dare!"

He opened the paper, and two dark ribbons fluttered out upon one corner of the document, held to the paper by a large seal of wax. He glanced over the heading. The document, in his own handwriting, read thus:

"In order that my life may not be taken by violence, which is threatened, and for which violence I fear no jury of my countrymen will find my murderer guilty, I make the following confession and promise. The penalty of failing in my promise will be death, and I know it. Under the promise of marriage I ruined the daughter of Mr. Baltimore's sister—Mr. Baltimore, I mean, who has present possession of 'The Glen.' She was my ward, appointed by will; and I know that I ought to die. Upon condition that he will spare my life, I solemnly swear that he shall marry my daughter Grace whenever and wherever he shall please to do so.

"NICHOLAS TRAVER."

N.

SEAL.

T.

When he recognised the handwriting of the first two lines he uttered a cry of anguish, and then made a quick movement to place the document under his princely mantle. But the white mask, with a dexterous dart of her sacrificial knife, pierced the palm of his hand, and he let the paper drop. Instantly she regained possession of it, and thrusting it into her bosom, stood upon the defensive, with the altar weapon glittering in the moonlight. She remained silent and watching him as he staunched the blood in his palm with his handkerchief. The wound was not dangerous, but he turned very pale under his mask, unable to explain a word of the document. He was completely foiled, and his usual self-possession deserted him. She held the proof of his infamy, and all hopes of gaining her were lost. At length, after binding up the wound, he looked at the beautiful image in white who stood so tragically before him in the moonlight, and said, calmly:

"Do you propose to make a public exhibition of that paper to the world?"

"No! your royal highness," was the sneering response of the white mask.

"What, then, will the priestess do with it? Offer it to the chaste goddess on your altar?"

"No!" said the white mask, fiercely; "keep it to torment your life and protect women from you."

"I shall leave these parts," was the cool reply. "You will hardly tramp the world after me."

"The vengeance of God will follow you. Hear me once more pronounce upon you the curse of a broken heart:

"May your bright and beautiful ones perish by violence; and your name be the symbol of terror for all time!"

The prince started back with a shudder of fear.

"What voice is that? Have the tombs an outlet, that that voice arises to curse me?"

"Ha! ha!" shouted the white mask in phrensy. "It was I cursed you. And I met your boy on the highway and

throttled him to death. Believe me, you will all perish by violence, for I am a mother, and I have cursed you. When the lightnings of God's wrath come, may you and your habitation be destroyed, and your name be the symbol of terror for all time!" She tore away the white mask, and the glaring eyes of the lunatic mother were revealed. With a yell of defiance, she brandished the knife of the priestess in his face, and then shouting: "Tremble when the lightning falls; tremble!" she darted off along the garden walk and vanished in the direction of the pine-bordered glen.

Dreamily, dreamily sounded the distant music as he stood there alone. He feared to follow her to attempt the recovery of the fatal document. The chances were that she was already following one of the circuitous paths around to the house to rejoin the dancers. It would require cunning and tact to regain the paper. She must be suddenly surprised and arrested as a lunatic, to prevent the agreement passing into other hands than his own. He reflected in silence for a few seconds what would be his best plan in returning to the revel. Finally he decided to steal as secretly as possible to the costume room of the gentlemen, and exchange his dress for one which she would not recognise upon his reëntering the ball. In pursuance of this purpose, he concealed the shawl of the priestess under his mantle and walked rapidly on through the garden towards the house. Maskers were promenading along the paths, and as he passed one lady, he heard her exclaiming:

"There goes the elegant prince of the night—what has he done with the priestess?"

He soon entered the connecting hall, and passing carelessly along the circular dining-room where the masqueraders were dancing merrily, he found his way to the dressing-rooms above, and proceeded to examine the costumes in the closets, which were carefully and civilly guarded and kept in order by the servants selected for that purpose. He succeeded in finding the dress of a harlequin which fitted him accurately,

and exchanging his mask for a black one, he mounted the cap and bells, and hastened to the apartments below: The same unflagging revelry was holding sway, and he commenced to act out his new character to perfection. Laughter greeted his droll remarks from every side; and he passed on, jesting with every one till he arrived once more at the grand dancing hall of marble. He had noticed that a gentleman in the dressing-room immediately donned the prince's suit which he had thrown aside, and, perfectly secure from recognition by this double change, he now endeavored to trace out the priestess again. It was a cruel satisfaction to him to reflect that there was a possibility of the gentleman in his rejected dress of the prince being some time startled during the evening by a sharp thrust of the knife of the lunatic priestess. He resolved to keep her in sight, in order that he might take advantage of any such startling episode to become one of those who should arrest her, and thus secure the fatal paper she carried in her bosom before it could be read by others. He wandered up and down the dancing-room in his search for the priestess; and bearing also in his mind his former purpose of finding out the disguise of Miss Angier. She was not, it appeared, lost to him after all; and though her conduct of the past year had baffled his idea of his supreme influence over women, he still trusted to deceive her and regain her confidence with his honeyed tongue. But as he strolled back and forth, entertaining the guests with his drollery, and occasionally joining capriciously in a dance, the recollection of the mother's curse would come back to him in terror, and an undefinable feeling of awe would creep over him. She had murdered his son, then. Whose death would she compass next? Was it improbable that, with the rare tact and cunning which often accompany insanity, she might have assumed another disguise by this time herself, and be prowling about among the dancers, watching her opportunity to bury her knife in him when she should succeed in identifying him again? He knew it was

not, and he remained upon his guard during the whole time that he was searching so diligently for Miss Angier. How had the lunatic escaped from the asylum? He had believed the rumor that she was dead. How had she gained admittance at the front door? Had Nora connived at her coming? It was possible; but not probable. With all his vindictiveness, he was obliged to admit the integrity and general propriety of the old nurse's conduct. She would hardly admit a wild lunatic to her friend Grace's entertainment. But how had the priestess gained possession of the terrible paper by which he had sold his daughter to old Baltimore? That document surely had been in the power of Nora. Another fact was singular enough to his studying mind.

The white mask had charged him with having offered himself to three young ladies within as many weeks. The charge had been so correct and truthful that he had been at a loss for a reply. The three were Miss Angier, Miss Rogers, and the unfortunate Marie. Who could have surmised thus correctly and informed the lunatic? He was puzzled by these reflections; terrified by the repetition of the curse which had haunted his memory for years, and seemed so often to obtain the sanction of Heaven. But notwithstanding all the anxieties of that night of revelry, he was still as indefatigable, as earnest in his search for the young lady who had tormented his pride and conceit for more than a year, as if she were the only being upon whom his attentions had ever been centred. She should love him and trust him, if the accomplishment of his purpose cost him the worry and ingenuity of years. But wander, and dance, and converse as he might, he could not detect her under her mask; neither did the figure of the pagan priestess reward his vigilant eye.

While Nicholas Traver continued his double and fruitless search, a wizard had arisen upon the scene. A fortune-teller of marvellous power and insight was gradually working his way through the different rooms, and everywhere eliciting ejaculations of surprise by the wonderful accuracy

with which he informed the masks who consulted him of their secret thoughts and of the objects of their love and friendship. Occasionally he would break forth in the recitation of extemporaneous verses appropriate to those who sought evidences of his power, and detailing to some of his listeners the several costumes they had put off and on during the evening. Believing themselves to have been remarkably dexterous in avoiding discovery, they were startled to learn that they had been tracked to the dressing-rooms and their changes of costume were known. A clamor being raised as to the accuracy of the wizard's statements, two or three of the guests were selected by the conjuror; and after describing the dresses which they had worn to the ball and the changes of costume they had made during the evening, he demanded of them by their proper names to unmask, and then testify as to the accuracy of what he had stated regarding the past and the present.

The masks were removed, and, to the surprise of the parties themselves and the masks standing around, he was proved to be a true wizard. Then, with a haughty accent of command, he exclaimed :

"Clear the way and let the prince of wizards pass. With such insight to the unknown of the past and present, who shall dispute my truth in regard to the future? Clear the way!" Amid shouts of applause and exclamations of surprise he moved on with dignity, draped in his loose robe of blue ornamented with flames and fiends in red, and waving his long sceptre before him. Pausing occasionally before some timid maiden whose mask would seem effectually to conceal her age, he would recite exquisite verses of her future fate, and then pass on with a chuckling laugh at the surprise and merriment he had occasioned.

At length, in the midst of his stately perambulations through the grand hall or colonnade, where the dancing had temporarily ceased, he was confronted by a lady-mask who disputed his power and defied him to declare who she was.

She was an exquisite figure, of medium height. Her graceful dancing had been repeatedly commented upon during the night; but no one felt satisfied of her identity. The character she had assumed was that of the "White Lady of Avenel." Her slight waist was circled by a golden zone, and the extraordinary luxuriance of her golden hair covered her snowy dress like a mantle. Her mask was white wire of remarkable fineness. Thus far she had eluded detection.

"Who am I, false wizard, and deceiver of mortals?" was the question of the white lady, as she swept her misty train up to his presence.

"The wizard's dream," was the solemn response, as he waved his sceptre slowly above her head.

"Answer me not in riddles," was the sharp retort, as she stamped her little white slipper upon the marble floor. "I knew your power was limited; your vaunted insight is gone. Who am I?"

The spectators who crowded up around the two, observed the faintest indication of a tremor in his voice as the wizard repeated these lines, emphasizing the word *dark* distinctly and slowly:

"Thy loveliness haunts me by day and by night,
Stealing over my soul like holy starlight;
I think of thee waking, and dream of thee oft,
With thy *dark* loving eyes and *dark* hair so soft.

"A voice ever whispered in years that are fled,
Of a vision to come of an ideal head,
So rare in its beauty and magical power,
That my soul would become a slave from that hour.

"How little I dreamed in my careless stroll,
Of meeting that angel, that light of my soul;
Who should fling open wide the bright gate of dreams,
And point to the altar where quenchless fire gleams?

"But that vision has come, and now evermore
My life shall resemble the surf on the shore,

That sighs and then struggles, but struggles in vain,
To recover its place upon the blue main.

"Yet welcome the unrest of sunshine and shower,
That mingles the smiles and the tears in an hour;
And welcome the sadness, the faintness and gloom,
The fluttering of heart, or chill of the tomb.

"To know thou art worthy of worship and love,
And purer than yon star that gleams from above;
To know that the homage of thousands is thine
Shall soothe the wild yearnings of this heart of mine."

"That is all very pretty and very sentimental, Mr. Wizard," exclaimed the white lady; "but I appeal to the company if it is not a palpable evasion of my question? Dark hair, indeed! Look at my tresses—golden as the sun! Ha! ha! the wizard is baffled; the mighty is fallen. Give me your sceptre; it has passed from you by right."

Unmindful of the lady's taunts, the sceptre still waved above her head as he pronounced these words:

"Beneath the golden stream as it flows,
Lurks raven hair of the *Baltimore* rose."

"Will you stake your sceptre and mask against my zone and mask?" said the white lady, eagerly.

"Mrs. Baltimore, I will," was the calm and confident response of the wizard.

The white lady removed her mask, and said: "Your power is beyond all comprehension. You have won."

The laughter of the company greeted the dark eyes of the mistress of "The Glen," as she presented her mask and zone to the wizard, and hastened away from the hall to change her dress. The conjuror appeared to be satisfied with his success in divining the secrets of others, for instantly he flung aside his mask and sceptre, appeared to rend his robe asunder before it fell to the floor, and with a shout of ex-

ultation stood before the surprised group of revellers in the barbaric costume of *Attila, King of the Huns*, and still disguised by a mask. Flinging his discarded dress into a side apartment, he joined the dance which was about to commence. He became at once the centre of speculation, but successfully he retained his incognito.

Mrs. Baltimore, immediately upon leaving the grand hall, turned into a small closet, of which she held the key. Locking the door behind her, she placed her hands upon a marble slab which held two silver basins for washing purposes, and by a slight exertion of strength the whole stand swung into the wall, exposing a narrow flight of steps leading down into the cellar. Before leaving the steps she put up her hands and swung the marble washstand back to its place. Then rapidly she descended to the floor of the cellar, and aided by the faint lights always kept burning below hurried on through the brick halls till she reached the cellar under the old house. Here she adjusted her key to a small point of iron in the stone foundation, and lo! a part of the wall itself moved inwards, exposing another secret stairway leading entirely up to her own suite of rooms in the second story. It was one of the concealed ways built for her by Nora, in response to her directions from Europe, and was masked in her bath-room above by a similar marble stand to the one which had furnished her a secret way into the cellar. Carefully closing the foundation-door behind her she ascended in darkness to her own apartments and emerged under the marble slab. Her maid, who was seated in her boudoir, was startled by the appearance of her mistress from the bath-room, but recollected at once that she might have entered that room from the hall. Several costumes and masks were spread upon Mrs. Baltimore's bed, and the maid was directed to array her mistress at once in a new disguise, as the old one had been discovered. The golden mantle of hair was flung aside. The fastenings of the lady's real hair were removed as she stood before her long mirror, and

down fell the luxuriant mass of dark tresses almost to the carpet.

"Don't tremble so, my lady," ejaculated the maid, as she proceeded to array her mistress anew for the revel. "It frightens me to see you so excited and trembling. Dear, dear, what can ail you? It seems like I could hear your heart beat. Is it the finding of you out that makes you tremble so? La! me, I wouldn't mind that. Some people allers has to be caught in such times as this. It's a lucky thing you wan't caught afore. Hannah, who has been stealing looks at you from the winder outside, says you was making all kinds of mischief of the folks as didn't know you. I think Hannah might come and take me place just a bit till I could look at 'em all meself. La! me, don't tremble so. Are you feeling well, ma'am?"

"Yes, yes! you silly thing, I am well enough, but I have been running. Do you know, that man disguised as a wizard exposed me before a crowd of people and took away my mask and zone? Draw that tighter—I can stand it a good deal tighter than that. Here—let me show you—that must meet all the way. Do you think I am going down there with a figure like a washerwoman? Why, it isn't near as tight as my every-day dresses. Put your hand under here, and you will see how loose it is."

"Providential!" exclaimed the maid, as she obeyed the last direction. "It is too loose for you altogether; you'll have to put on another waist. Why don't you wear *that* dress; that'll be sweeter nor this."

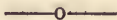
"Oh! mercy!" exclaimed her mistress, "I'll *never* be dressed. I must find out who that wizard is. I'm so afraid he will change his dress, and then I can't track him. Do hurry. Yes! put that on, or anything—only hurry."

"Indeed, my lady, I'm doing the best I kin; but it takes time to fix such queer garments as these. Be patient, only one minute now—there! that's together. Now you begin to look perfectly splendid. Oh, my! how your eyes

are a glistenin'. And who do you think the wizard is, that you're so mighty curious to find him out?"

"Never mind. He's a gentleman."

"Of course, ma'am; I knew that. Wizards is all gentlemen, or men—'tall events, they're not women."



CHAPTER XXIX.

THE new costume was at last adjusted, and she stood before the mirror surveying herself and holding a yellow satin mask in her hand. She was the "Queen of the Fairies," arrayed in golden satin, with a long train studded with large single diamonds, which flashed brilliantly at every movement. She wore a crown of gold of open work most delicately traced like the lines of a spider's web. Her hair was concealed by a lace veil. Her bust and arms were disguised by the clouds of white illusion which enveloped her; but one gloved hand was apparent, holding her sceptre composed entirely of jewels.

"Do you think they will know me, Clorinde?" she said to the maid.

"No more than they would an angel just dropped out of heaven," was the complimentary response.

Her mistress appeared to study a few seconds in silence, as the maid moved entirely around her, expressing her admiration. Then she said, as if with a sudden purpose:

"I would like so much to entrust you with a mission for me. Can you keep a secret?—keep close-mouthed if I will dress you up, and send you down into the dancing hall in disguise?"

"Bless your sweet heart!" exclaimed the maid, in raptures, "wouldn't I give a pretty penny to go into that beautiful hall and wear a mask, and all. Oh! Mrs. Baltimore, can you be askin' me if I kin keep secrets? Did I ever breathe a

single word that you trusted me with? Let me go for you and I'll do everything you wants of me, and——"

"There—that is enough. I will let you go, if you think you can play your part well enough."

"It's me tongue I'm afearin', ma'am. Me discourse will show that I'm not a lady."

"No! that will be just the thing. I'll dress you like a lady's maid, and they'll think your talk is put on for a disguise. You'll be the most disguised person in the ball, for they'll never dream of your being a sure-enough maid. You may go, if you'll promise to say nothing to the servants or anybody else about what happens, or about your attending the ball."

"I'll promise you on my bended knees," declared the maid, half-crazy with delight. "Oh! but won't I play me part; jest trust me with anything. I'll be the fine lady's maid, that will whisper me lady's secrets into the ears of the gentlemen—that I will."

"I don't want you to tell any secrets, only to find some out," said her mistress.

"Oh! ma'am," exclaimed Clorinde, in an offended tone, "I wouldn't tell *your* secrets; you might know that. Only pretend to know other ladies' secrets, and git round the gentlemen that way. That's what I mean."

"Yes! that will do," said Mrs. Baltimore. "Now listen to me. The chances are, that some ladies who know I was found out will gather at the foot of the stairs, or near them, and look to see what new dress comes down. Now I am determined they shall not know me in that way. You must go down first, and it will be a long time before they see me come down. You will probably be taken for me by some of them, if they happen to be on the lookout at the foot of the stairs. But you go right on and play the lady's maid. Never mind any one in particular, but keep right on till you enter the grand colonnade. Look about you for the wizard, the man in a blue robe, with fire and devils all over it. Don't

permit him to leave your sight. See that he makes no change of dress that you can't follow up. Keep as close to him as you can, and if you find an opportunity, take his arm and talk to him. I *must* know who he is. If you will find out with certainty who he is—you shall own the brown silk trimmed with black velvet that I wore yesterday. But you must be very sharp. He is one of the brightest men here to-night. Can you stick to him close, and find out who he is?"

"Trust me," was the confident response of the maid. "I'll own that brown silk long afore daylight. And you don't wish me, ma'am, to tell him anything for you?"

"No, indeed!" said her mistress; "only find out who he is."

"I'll do that thing," said Clorinde, nearly frantic with joy at the idea of attending the ball.

Mrs. Baltimore proceeded at once to array Clorinde as a maid in attendance upon a fine lady. The girl was delighted with her new appearance, and when the mask was handed her she commenced her performances, bows, and simpers, and "my lady So-and-So says."

"You will succeed, Clorinde, admirably," said her mistress; "now off with you."

The maid hastened away; and, descending the stairs, was greeted, as her mistress had anticipated, by the remarks of two or three lady masks.

"That is admirable, Mrs. Baltimore; *we* know you. You will cheat everybody else, however; go out into the dining-hall."

The maid commenced to hum a rural love-song, and bowing and simpering with her hands thrust into the pockets of her white apron, passed along, unmindful of their fancied recognition. But a gentleman mask was also on the watch for a new-comer from the costume-rooms. The moment the maid had passed the group of ladies, he stepped forward, and presenting his arm to her, said :

"My pretty maid, will you do me the honor of walking with me?"

"No, thank'ee," said the girl; "my mistress says I'm too giddy-headed now, with all me beaux; and she forbid me to walk wid any man—perticklerly wid strangers."

"But I'm no stranger," said the mask. "Look at me—everybody knows me—I'm the great Attila, King of the Huns—I destroyed cities without number."

"I don't care if you did," said the maid; "you ain't going to destroy me, for I ain't without a number—I am number one, and I'm going to take care of it, too."

"Ah, you sweet creature—only walk with me a few minutes."

"Get out," was the unceremonious response; "my mistress said I want to be coaxed—and I don't put any faith in your bein' a king—you look like a butcher, with that great big knife."

The magnificently attired King of the Huns roared with laughter, and exclaimed: "It's a short step from the sublime to the ridiculous, I know; but I thought my dress was stupendous, annihilating, and awful in its barbaric splendor."

"What's the price of veal?" was the contemptuous reply of the maid.

"Come with me, my sweet little lamb," said the ancient butcher of mankind, "and I will show you my pretty shop—there's plenty of material in there to make veal of, I assure you. Do come!"

"Where are you going?" said the maid, as the king again offered her his arm.

"Into the grand dancing-hall, you pretty-looking creature. Will you honor me by taking my arm?"

"That is the very place I want to go," said Clorinde. "I've heard there's a fortune-teller in there as knows every blessed thing."

"We'll see if we can find him, if you will take my arm," said the king.

The offer was accepted, and the maid passed on under escort of the former wizard, who felt confident he was conducting Mrs. Baltimore in her new disguise. What was the surprise of Clorinde upon reaching the grand colonnade, to discover that the "Queen of the Fairies" was already promenading that hall in advance of her. How, in the name of miracles, had her mistress succeeded in reaching that hall in advance of her, if not through the agency of real fairy power! But the maid was too intent upon her mission, and too absorbed by the gallant talk of her companion, to notice Mrs. Baltimore long, or indulge in speculations upon her marvellous speed in reaching the hall first. The wizard was nowhere to be seen, but Attila was apparently very obliging in his efforts to track him out for her contemplation. Finding at last that the wizard had vanished, she consented to accompany the King of the Huns to the gardens where the fortune-teller might be promenading. After a long search, the maid concluded that the wizard must have changed his costume, and that her anticipated present of the brown silk dress would prove to be mythical. Under these depressing circumstances she was the more easily persuaded to accept the king's offer of a *tête-à-tête* on one of the rustic benches of the garden.

The mistress of "The Glen," in the meantime, pursued her own search for the wizard. Seeing her maid walking about with the King of the Huns, she supposed she was still obeying her directions, and took no further notice of her. She was persuaded to dance once by a Greek sailor who offered her his arm. When the dance was finished she asked her partner what had become of the fortune-teller. The sailor expressed his ignorance of his whereabouts, but offered to assist her in finding him, that their fortunes might be foretold. In the course of their inquiries through the rooms they chanced to meet a lady mask, who informed them that the wizard had suddenly transformed himself into Attila. Mrs. Baltimore made some excuse to the sailor for leaving him, and hastened away to find the King of the Huns, whom

she recollected her maid had gone off with. In vain did she search for the lost couple. They were in none of the dancing-rooms. Then she traversed the gardens slowly and alone. She could not find them there, and returned to the dancing-hall of marble. As she ascended the step from the connecting-hall, she turned to look over her shoulder. She espied her maid hastening towards her. The first whisper of the servant in the ear of her mistress was:

"I have made some dreadful mischief. I found out the wizard, but he has left me and gone off very angry."

"What in the world have you been doing, Clorinde?"

"Why, ma'am, you know you said I must play my part the best I knowed how, and I did it. I sposed the way was to hide anybody's real character, and make believe it was somebody else. So I did it."

"And who, pray, did you represent yourself to be?" said Mrs. Baltimore.

"Why, ma'am, you see, I made out first as if I was a lady's waitin' maid. And the gentleman as was wid me played like he believed I was, too. Then, by-me-by, he asked me if I wouldn't like to walk in the garden, and I says yes; 'cause I was huntin' for the wizard. We couldn't find the wizard, hunt high, hunt low. Then he asked me what made me so curious to find the wizard; and says I, 'cause I likes him.' 'Very much?' says he. 'Yes,' says I, '*awful* much.' Then he asked me what I'd give him if he'd tell me who the wizard was, and I told him most anything he'd ask. And what do you think, ma'am, he did ask?"

"A kiss, I'll venture," said her mistress.

"You've guessed it exact," said the maid.

"Well," said Mrs. Baltimore, "what next? You didn't let him kiss you—did you, you huzzy?"

"How could I help it, ma'am?" remonstrated Clorinde. "It wud be the means of telling me what you wanted to know, ma'am; and then, ma'am, I was thinkin' of me brown silk dress with the velvet trimmin's that I was to have."

"Oh, you good-for-nothing thing!" exclaimed her mistress, "have you no more sense than that?"

The maid hung her head abashed, and muttered: "It was in the line of me duty, ma'am; it was to obey your orders, ma'am, and find out who the wizard was."

"And did he tell you?"

"After he'd kissed me, ma'am—oh! awful hard—says he, 'I'm the wizard; I changed my dress.' Says I, 'Who are you, any way?' And do you believe, ma'am, he said that was a second question, and he wouldn't answer it without another kiss."

"I suppose you did not refuse him?" said her mistress.

"How could I ma'am? just to be sure who he was."

"Well, go on. Did he tell you, then?"

"This is the answer he made, ma'am; says he, 'I'm a lawyer—that's who I am.'"

"And then I suppose he wanted another kiss for another answer. Oh, Clorinde, how could you act so! Don't you know how dangerous it is for a girl like you to be allowing such familiarities from men?"

"There wasn't a bit of danger for me, ma'am, for he was surely a kissin' me for some other person."

"How can you know that?" inquired her mistress, angrily.

"'Cause he kept puttin' his arm around my waist, and callin' me 'Mrs. Baltimore' the hull time. Bless your soul, ma'am, he told me all about it. How he stood at the foot of the stairs and watched for you, after he showed you up afore all the company, and was sartin you'd come down in some simple dress, and he knowed I was you; and he'd been crazy with love for me, for ever so many months, and he couldn't help tellin' me at last, and hoped I'd forgive him; and he kept a kissin' of me the hull time like he thought he'd got the hull market of them things all to himself. What could I do, ma'am?"

"What did you do?" said her mistress, sternly.

"Oh, don't be angry, ma'am; I did it all for the best. I jest let him talk on till I found out who he was—and who do you think, ma'am, he was?"

"I don't know, surely," said Mrs. Baltimore.

"Why he was that Mr. Rutherford, that smart man that everybody's a-talkin' about."

"And how do you know that?" inquired her mistress, apparently much mollified.

"Why, ma'am, I made him take off his mask, and I seen him."

"You had to pay for that, too, I'll venture."

"Of course I did, ma'am; he most took away my breath."

"Well, what next? go on—tell me all."

"Why then, ma'am, I looked at his face, and I sot up a scream—like as if I was awful surprised—and says I: 'Oh, Mr. Rutherford, my goodness gracious, this is a terrible mistake! I thought all the time you was Sir Francis Cleveland. I would not have let you kiss me for all the world.' And then I up and run away from him, like I was frightened most to death. And when I got around to the house, I hid and watched for him; and do you believe, I seen him come out of the garden with his mask off, and he jest as pale as death. He wouldn't come into the house, but kept right on around to the front porch, and I followed him on the sly; and jest as sure as you're alive, ma'am, he called to one of the servants to bring him his horse, and away he went—the maddest man you ever seen. I'm so sorry for him, ma'am; but I found him out, and he's the wizard; and I hope you won't forget how hard work I've had, ma'am, earnin' of my brown silk dress with the black velvet trimmin's. Oh! don't do so, ma'am, I beg of you. I'm dreadful sorry ef I've done anything as wasn't right—indeed I am—indeed I am."

Mrs. Baltimore controlled her emotion, whatever it was that occasioned the deprecatory tone of her maid. Masks were gathering about her to express their admiration of

her fairy costume, and she said in a low earnest voice, that none but Clorinde could hear :

“Go directly to my room and remove your disguise. Don’t you dare to mention anything that has occurred to-night. The brown silk is yours—take it when you please.”

No one who followed the movements of the Queen of the Fairies, or noted her gay laugh during the remainder of that eventful night, would conceive of the heavy heart she bore under the golden satin robe. The one bright dream of her life had vanished at the moment of its fulfilment. She felt the tremor of Rutherford’s voice as he pronounced over her the verses of his love and admiration for her. To make “assurance doubly sure,” she had called in the assistance of her maid to identify the wizard. He loved her then with all the fervor of his great soul. His love had been offered to her in the person of Clorinde. He was satisfied the mistress of “The Glen” was before him, and he had offered himself only to be informed that she was mistaken in the person, and loved the Englishman. He must believe it. He would believe it. It was the impression of the neighborhood. Sir Francis Cleveland and his daughter had been invited for the second time to the estate, and she knew that rumor pronounced decidedly upon their engagement. Could she ever rectify the dreadful mistake of her maid? Could she ever sacrifice modesty sufficiently to tell him he had been deceived? She felt that she could not. He had dashed away from her estate mortified, wounded, wretched. He would never return. His pride would make her home the great place of all others to be shunned. Higher and higher upon the hill of fame would he ascend, seeking to bury his love and shame in the narcotic of ambition and worldly praise, and still would the arrow of agony rankle in his heart. He would never love another woman as he did her. She knew he was too noble, too great, for more than one love. He might in time marry another woman, as one partakes of an opiate to gain a temporary oblivion of pain. But in his great

hours of success or loneliness he would fall down before the altar of her memory and worship in tears. The consciousness that Rutherford loved her had been as the growth of a flower. The tiny plant had given no definite idea of form and color; as it expanded into the perfect plant there still was no assurance of the flower to come. At last the bud was manifest, and as she timidly put on her fairy guise to wander around it, and watch its last development, the flower burst forth into full bloom, and instantly was torn from its stem by the rude hand of her maid. He had offered himself and been rejected. She was a woman and could make him no offer in return. How drearily sounded the music! how tasteless seemed the viands of the great feast when the masks were removed and friends looked into each other's eyes once more! Only two of the maskers were missing at the hour of supper, the priestess and the barbarian king. Many were the conjectures concerning the lost two. They must have been lovers, who still lurked away in some corner unmindful of supper when the food of the soul was exchanged. The mistress of the revel was the object of admiration now as she sat at the banquet with the fairy crown and the mock laughter and the breaking heart. Her wit sparkled high amid the gay revellers, and still was she alone; without her were the emblems of wealth and power; within her, only weariness and despair.

* * * * *

The clock in the boudoir of the young widow struck *four*. Three ladies were seated upon the bed in the adjoining room discussing the events of the ball, which had just terminated in the flight of the revellers to their homes.

Miss Angier, with dishevelled hair and a loose wrapper, counted the strokes, and then exclaimed with a yawn:

"Oh, dear! four o'clock at last. Life is real—life is earnest. For my part, I wish poets had never been born. They have a way of telling us so many disagreeable truths.

What's the matter, Mrs. Baltimore? You look weary of life, and you were the belle of the evening, too."

"No, no, Katy," said the young widow, also in dishabille, with her dark hair streaming down in disorder, which old Nora was quietly endeavoring to comb out for her, "I'm not weary of life—only the life of this land. What do you say of another visit to Europe? There is so much of the classic and the beautiful there yet for us to see. I fear the winter will be too lonely for us here upon this old place when the storms set in and our friends are gone."

"What, and leave all this luxury and comfort behind us for the slim chances of hotel comfort on the continent?" exclaimed her friend. "What's the matter with you, honey? I never knew you look so sepulchral before. Don't you give away with your bright face to the blues, or poor Kate Angier will invite you to her funeral before two weeks. I live in the light of your eyes, as the lovers say; and if those stars set, Kate Angier's night has surely come. Cheer up. You didn't drink any champagne to-night—that's what's the matter. Shall I ring for some? I think one more glass would enable me to see my grandmother's ghost crowned and beautiful. For it's—

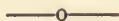
"Sparkling and bright in its liquid light,
Is the wine our goblets filling;
With a hue as red as the rosy bed,' etc., etc., etc.

Ha! ha! Cheer up, mistress of millions. If I was you, and you was me, I'd spend my millions on a spree. Why, what's the matter with you, ducky?"

"Hush your nonsense," replied Mrs. Baltimore, making a heroic effort to laugh. "If I didn't know the strength of your head, I should mildly insinuate that you were affected by wine. If I'm low-spirited, you are growing reckless. You're not the self-possessed damsel you were a year ago. Nora, look at her—she is going to throw all those fancy dresses over onto us. Kate—you Kate—don't you do it."

The remonstrance came too late. A pile of costumes was lifted and showered over Mrs. Baltimore and Nora. "I'm going to stir you up a little—you need it, both of you—here's more of the same sort." Another shower of dry-goods enveloped both of them. They could not restrain her disposition to romp, and in a few minutes the whole party were in an uproar, laughing and heaping the loose articles over each other. In a few minutes, the gay girl stood by the door, and, enjoying their confusion amid pillows and dresses, shouted before leaving: "I knew I could get you all in better spirits. Ha, ha! look at Nora's hair. Good-night—good-morning, I mean."

Thus parted two wretched and beautiful beings, happy only in the friendship of each other; the lover of one rejected for his crimes, the lover of the other rejected through the stupidity of a maid.



CHAPTER XXX.

RUTHERFORD, after leaving the park, put spurs to his horse and flew homeward like the wind. It was not far from daylight, and the setting moon shed a sickly light from the west. The pale, gloomy scene accorded with his desolation of heart. The earth was gloomy, the lamp of heaven was gloomy, the hopes of the future were more gloomy still. To struggle for fame and wealth, that a loving heart may share them with us; to know that one eager soul watches our efforts with hope and sympathy; to feel that a kindred nature shares our impulses and aspirations—all these nerve us in the hour of depression to rise and struggle upwards still. Few know the reaction and the weariness, the faintness and the foreboding of failure, which follow upon long continued and severe effort of the impulsive soul which aspires to intellectual fame.

There is an intensity and concentration of purpose in the student who so persistently isolates himself from society and friends, which one might imagine to be substitutes for human sympathy and kindness. But no lofty purpose, no devotion to intellectual ambition, can comfort and sustain him when he emerges from that isolation, weary in mind, and with the nerves of the brain excited and overtaken. Then does the heart stretch forth its tendrils, present its claims to gentleness and sympathy; and in the rest and peace secured through the instrumentality of kind words, cheering appreciation, and the gentle and magnetic touch of loving hands, is born new strength for future effort in the noble, arduous pursuits of the intellectual. The most persistent devotees at the temple of fame are often the most tender and sensitive in the affections of the heart. Spurn them, neglect them as they issue from that temple, weary and sick with the strain upon the nerves, and longing for quiet and sympathy, and you may drive them to the Lethe of some sensual opiate which ruins soul and body, blights the intellect, and leaves on the pedestal of love only the image of despair.

Such a nature did Rutherford, the young orator of the highlands, possess. When the bugle-blast of fame proclaimed most thrillingly his advent on the borders of eloquence and letters, his heart turned eagerly about for some object of love to share his pride and success. The magnetic needle of his soul pointed at last to Grace Baltimore. And when her image became distinct and beautiful upon the mirror of his taste and judgment; when he realized how essential her existence had become to his own happiness in life, with the impulse, the uncalculating earnestness of a true heart, he sought her hand. The rebuff came so unexpectedly, it shocked the refinement of his heart. Not without encouragement, not rashly, had he approached the heiress of millions. There had been palpable manifestations of partiality for his society. She preferred his conversation to that of any of the visitors at "The Glen." He could not but observe the

truth, and he felt assured that his character stood high in her esteem. And when, therefore, she avowed so abruptly her partiality for the Englishman, and her horror at the mistake she had made in the masker beside her, the floodgates of shame were opened. He felt confident that the mystery, the suspicion attending his birth, his want of home and family, had condemned him to be an outcast from joy for ever. He had been abandoned by the woman, whose independence of character he had estimated so high, because she was not an iron breakwater to cleave the waves of prejudice. He looked inwards and beheld integrity; he looked upwards and realized the God who made him. Like the mother who convulsively draws the veil for the last time over the face of her dead, her only child, and turns to God for future comfort alone, so did Rutherford tear himself away from the home and the presence of that superb woman whose equal he had never seen, save in his dreams of the ideal.

Purposeless, desolate, with no idea save that of burying himself away from the gaze of men in some lonely spot where he could mourn unnoticed, the lawyer, in his strange garb, found himself close upon the hour of dawn standing before the long-neglected and deserted cottage of old Nora on the outskirts of the town. He had left the borrowed horse with the owner on his way through the silent streets, and now stood with Nora's key before her vacant tenement. He had often availed himself of the old woman's invitation to use her key in making his visits to the height of Stormcliff. He felt so utterly deserted now that he yearned to ascend the subterranean path to the summit, and watch the god of day rise upon the world. Nature had not deserted him yet, and in her companionship he had often found solace and strength.

He was surprised to find a human being seated upon the doorstep. The pale light in the east revealed an obstruction in his way in the shape of an old man. Stooping to examine the stranger, he discovered that he was sleeping. Pity was aroused at once, for the October morning was cold, and per-

haps the old wanderer had been sleeping there all night. He touched the stranger's forehead; it was very cold. He resolved to arouse him, and if necessary offer him a place upon the floor of Nora's tenement. But his gentle touch had been sufficient, for the old man started and opened his eyes.

"What are you doing here, my old friend?" he asked, kindly.

"Waiting for the owner of the house to wake up," was the response.

"Rather useless keeping such a vigil," said the lawyer. "This house has not been occupied for a long time."

"Ho! ho!" exclaimed the stranger, in surprise. "They told me about one o'clock at the tavern that this was old Nora Rudd's house."

"They told you right, then. It belongs to her; but she don't live in it now. She lives several miles away from here up the river."

"They might have been civil enough to tell me that," said the old man, rising to his feet, and glancing in amazement at the lawyer's startling costume. "But I must be dreaming yet, for it seems to me as if you were some kind of an ancient king, with your crown, and armor, and sword, and all. Am I dreaming yet, my friend?"

"No! you are awake. No doubt I look singular enough to you, for I have been out late to a masquerade-ball, and I haven't succeeded in reaching my bed yet. Do you know old Nora Rudd?"

The old man looked keenly at his interrogator before he replied. Then he said, dryly:

"I do know her, else I wouldn't be waiting for her here. I came on the boat late last night. We were delayed, and I thought when I arrived at the tavern that perhaps I might succeed in waking the old lady up and getting a lodging here. The stable-boy up there directed me here when I asked about her house. But he must have been a kind of fool to send an old man like me to an empty house."

"I should think so," said the lawyer. "But if you wish to see Mrs. Rudd you will have to travel some distance yet. She lives on an estate called 'The Glen.'"

"You don't tell me so," exclaimed the old man. "Why that's the old place of the Baltimore family. It can't be possible she is staying *there*!"

"Why not?" said Rutherford. "These old nurses have no limit to the places they can stay at, so far as my experience goes."

"My young friend, are you positive about it?"

"Certainly I am. I have just come from there myself. The ball was there, and I saw Nora there. She has been there a long time."

"Let me see," said the old man; "what's the name of the Baltimore that owns the place now? He's an old man, if I recollect aright."

"The Glen is owned by a lady now," replied Rutherford; "Mrs. Grace Baltimore, the widow of old Baltimore, is the present proprietor."

"Was old Baltimore married?" asked the stranger, in surprise.

"He was married about seven years ago," was the response. "It was about that long ago that he was married."

"And pray who did he marry?" persisted the old man.

"Miss Grace Traver, the daughter of Nicholas Traver."

"And did he have a daughter old enough to marry that old man?"

"She was fifteen years old, I believe," replied the lawyer.

"That was strange," muttered the stranger.

"I think so myself," replied Rutherford. "It was a great discrepancy in their ages. But what do you intend to do—go back to the tavern?"

"I don't know," said the old man, recalled to the necessities of the present. "I came to this town to see old Nora Rudd. I had just money enough to bring me here, and I

haven't anything to pay my way here at the tavern, and I fear I shall have to walk out to 'The Glen.'"

"That will be a long tramp for an old man like you," said Rutherford, in a kindly tone, which gave the stranger encouragement, for he said :

"If I can get to see old Nora Rudd, she will let me have all the money I need ; and if I can find somebody in this town kind enough to loan me money to hire a horse to take me out there, I will be able to pay it back by to-night or to-morrow morning."

"You appear to be acquainted with this neighborhood," said Rutherford, steadily contemplating the features of the stranger, which were becoming more distinct in the increasing dawn.

"Yes," he replied, "I knew this country many years ago. But you know there's many changes in a place in a quarter of a century, and it's upwards of that since I laid my eyes on this town last."

"I must have been quite a young fellow about the time you were here last, then," said the lawyer, examining the stranger's features more closely.

The old man looked at him from head to foot, and then said : "You're a powerful-looking man, I declare. I should say you're not over thirty yet."

"I'll soon be that," said the lawyer, suddenly changing his purpose of entering Nora's house, and turning away. After a few steps, however, he turned back, and seeing the old man still standing in uncertainty of purpose, he said to him :

"I can't see a fellow-being in a tight place without trying to do something for him. Are you a friend of old Nora?"

"I am that," said the stranger, moving on to the lawyer's side. "She'll feel happier at seeing my face than she has been for many a long day, I'll venture."

"How so?" inquired Rutherford.

"That's a matter between the old woman and me," he replied, guardedly.

"Well," said the lawyer, "if you are a friend of Nora, you shall have a helping hand from me; for she's my best friend in the world. Come along with me to my little house. I'll give you a breakfast cooked by my own hands, and then I'll hire a horse for you and start you off."

"Why! you're the good Samaritan, ain't you? May I inquire your name, sir?"

"Certainly. Rutherford's my name. Clarence Rutherford. I'm a lawyer."

"Rutherford, Rutherford?" repeated the old man. "I don't think I ever knew any person by that name. Was you a native of this place, sir?"

"Yes; born and brought up here. But let's hurry along. I don't think people will understand how the King of the Huns has descended, or ascended rather, into the streets of this town; and I'd rather they wouldn't get an opportunity to speculate about it either. Let's hurry along to my office, and I'll change my dress."

Thus admonished, the stranger quickened his pace, and they moved rapidly along together. Few persons were stirring on the streets, and they succeeded in a few minutes in crossing the town, and reaching the lawyer's office by the river. The only person who noted the lawyer's appearance in the distance was a small juvenile, who shouted:

"Cricky, the surkis is a comin'."

When the stranger had been introduced to the interior of the little office, where he was directed to be seated until the lawyer could change his garments and prepare the morning meal, he examined curiously every article in the room, even taking up some of the law books from the table and glancing over their titles. Before he had made a thorough survey of the apartment, he was startled by a sudden noise behind him. Turning around in his chair, he beheld the old clock diligently marking off the hour. With an exclamation, he started to his feet.

"Where in the name of God did you get that clock?"

Rutherford, who was building a fire on the hearth, looked up and said :

"It was willed to me. Why, is there anything peculiar about it?"

The old man quickly regained his reserve of manner, and answered :

"Why, yes—I should say there was. It's a rare thing to meet such a piece of furniture these days. When I was a boy those clocks were in fashion ; but now, my goodness, it is odd enough to meet with one. You say it was willed to you?"

"Yes," said the lawyer, resuming his work on the hearth. "That's all that the past has left *me* for a legacy."

The old man was regarding him intently as he inquired :

"I hope it ain't presumption in me to inquire who willed the old thing to you, is it?"

"Oh no," said the lawyer, still continuing his work, and looking down at the flames slowly enveloping his kindling wood. "Judge Holden willed that clock to me."

"The deuce he did," said the stranger, trying to get a better look at his companion's face. "Was old Judge Holden any kin of yours?"

"Not that I know of," said the lawyer.

"Well, upon my word, now that I see your face better, I declare you look amazingly like the Judge. Your mouth and forehead is the Judge's all over again. Likely you was a friend of his?"

"You seem to have a pretty good memory for faces twenty-five years ago," said Rutherford, turning away from his fire, and going in pursuit of cooking utensils. "I've heard that remark of yours repeated many a time. Everybody traces a strong likeness in me to the Judge. No, the Judge wasn't any particular friend of mine, else he would have given me something more in the shape of legal tender than that old baggage."

"But how came he to do it, anyway?" persisted the stranger.

"That's as much a mystery to me, my friend, as it is to you," was the response.

Rutherford was too busy to notice the effect of his answer upon the old man. The stranger was on the very point of uttering an exclamation as he arose partly from the chair; but he restrained himself, and dropped back again into his seat. Resting his face upon his hand, he watched every movement of his host, eagerly looking into his face when the changing attitudes of the lawyer gave him an opportunity. At length he appeared to be perfectly satisfied with his scrutiny, for he arose from his chair, and walking around to the old clock, examined it from top to bottom. His back was towards his host, so that the expression of his countenance, as he contemplated the old monitor, was not seen. Then he came back to his seat, and after a few minutes of silent reflection, he said :

"The Judge was a pretty likely man."

"A very fine man," was the lawyer's reply. "His character stood high in this community."

"And did he leave much property?" inquired the old man.

"Oh, yes, a very handsome fortune. And his homestead, Rockview, is considered one of the finest estates in this county," said the lawyer, striving to suppress an emotion of pain at the allusion.

"Any heirs, sir?"

"He had no children," was the response. "He left his entire property to a relative in trust."

"And why in trust?" inquired the stranger.

"Because the Judge was under the impression that a child of his, who had been missing since infancy, was still alive somewhere on the earth, and might turn up some day. He believed that his own child had been exchanged for another in infancy, and he determined to retain his property for that lost child."

"I suppose he acted upon information, and not from eccentricity," said the stranger.

"I cannot inform you on that subject, for the simple reason that I do not know," replied Rutherford.

"But what child did the Judge suppose his own child had been exchanged for?"

"For the child who is busily preparing your breakfast for you at this very moment," said the lawyer.

"I thought so," muttered the stranger. But he was overheard.

"You did? What made you suppose that?" asked the lawyer, pausing in the act of clearing off his table for the breakfast which was now cooking, and looking in amazement at the old man. The stranger appeared embarrassed at being overheard, and made no response.

"How could you suppose anything about it without knowing me?" inquired Rutherford again.

"Why," said the man slowly, and as if studying his answer—"why, you see you look like old Judge Holden—and you walk like him, and your voice reminds me of him every minute—that's why."

"So you knew him well, did you?"

"Oh, I knew him," said the stranger, evasively.

"Well, I'm that child, sure enough, and I have no parents that I ever heard of, and I just have to fight single-handed against the world. I've been pretty successful, but I'm growing tired of being kin to nobody, and I don't care much what happens to me now."

There was such despondency in the young lawyer's tones that the old man seemed touched.

"Never say that word this side of the grave, young man. The devil likes such conclusions as that. Keep a stout heart to the end, and remember that God helps those that help themselves."

"I take it back, sir," said Rutherford; "it's a weakness to give up. But I'm mighty lonely, sometimes, I can tell you."

"And does old Nora Rudd never come to see you?" inquired the old man.

"Bless her old heart," exclaimed Rutherford, "she's always stood by me and defended me and cheered me up, when my heart was most broken. She is a splendid woman. I wonder who she is? Nobody seems to know."

"I know," said the old man, calmly.

"The mischief you do," exclaimed the lawyer.

"Indeed I do," answered the stranger. "But look here, young man: let this be a lesson to you as long as you live. Never refuse to help a fellow-being in trouble when you can. You have treated me like a gentleman, and you've entertained an angel in disguise. You'll find that fact out before you're many days older. But don't you be asking me questions now. Just wait till I have seen old Nora, and then if you don't hear something to your advantage, take this old man's head for a football."

Rutherford looked anxiously at the stranger.

"Don't ask me questions, young man—wait—I can't explain matters until I have consulted old Nora."

"Well," said the lawyer, "draw your chair up to the table and I'll give you some breakfast. So you think I look like the Judge, do you?"

"You're his image, and nothing else. I never saw such a resemblance before. And so Nora lives at 'The Glen' now, does she?"

"She does that."

"And is she a nurse there?"

"No, she's a kind of factotum, steward, and friend, and housekeeper, and everything. Mrs. Baltimore has great confidence in her. She used to be Grace Traver's old nurse. That's how the intimacy arose between them. Here, try some of this coffee. I've had to learn everything in battling with this world. I was left without a cent. But my old friend, the clock there and I have fought our way up in life. I've bought and paid for this house and lot, been elected to

the Legislature, and have quite a little business in the law building up around me. But alas! I feel lonely and discouraged. It's mighty hard to live alone. Did you ever try it?"

"No, never," was the response. "I have a family, and it's been a tough time for me to support them; but I have contrived to live along by keeping a stout heart. I am a sail-maker by trade, and I have wandered in most every country in the world. I have been gone from my native land many years. I have just returned from England now."

"Where is your family?"

"They're in New York. I brought them back from England with me. They've been living with me while I wandered about the world."

"And where did you know Nora Rudd?"

"Here, and in New York. But don't question me now. When I return from 'The Glen,' I'll have another talk with you."

"You've no objection to giving me your name," said the lawyer.

"None at all. My name is Moses Goble."

"That's very queer!" exclaimed Rutherford.

"I don't think so," said the old man. "I think that's a very respectable name."

"No! not the name, but the coincidence."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, in one of those strange trances which Nora Rudd is subject to, she foretold that my own fate would be influenced this fall by the appearance of a man named Moses Goble. She was sitting here a few months ago, in that very chair that you occupy now, when the trance came upon her."

"And is she subject to those trances yet?"

"Yes, several times a year she has them."

"I've no doubt," said the stranger, "that her having been expecting me to return to this country, produced that remark in her trance."

"Perhaps so," said Rutherford, thoughtfully. "But this whole subject of trances is an enigma. Perhaps science will explain it some day. Are you ready now for your horse? If so, we will go to the stables at once. I have much business to attend to to-day, and the morning is my best time for work."

"All ready now," said the old man; "and many thanks for your kindness. I trust you will feel in better spirits when I return. Young people should be the gay ones in this world; but you've done wonders under the circumstances."

Thus speaking, he followed the dejected lawyer into the street of the town.



CHAPTER XXXI.

It was mid-day early in the dreamy month of October. The purple grapes on the garden trellises still hung in huge clusters awaiting the pleasure of their owner. The mansion had been vacated by the tenant a few weeks before, and no one remained upon the premises but an old female servant, who had lived many years upon the property, and was permitted to remain now by the kindness of the agent. She had been a favorite domestic of the deceased proprietor. The family, who had leased the property, and had just vacated it, were induced to retain the services of the old woman during their occupancy of the estate. But now they were gone, and the lonely old creature wandered up and down the meadowlands or slowly traversed the garden paths dreaming of the past, and wondering what was to become of her now. An old blue sun-bonnet shaded her face from the warm rays of the noontide as she moved about the premises, and her faded calico, as it trailed slowly along, swept the crisp and rustling leaves which had fallen upon the avenues.

She paused at length before the deserted mansion, and looking up at its closed blinds and its stately proportions, as it stood so far above the surrounding lands on its lofty pedestal of rocks, which in the ancient time had been severed from the adjacent mountain probably by volcanic action, she muttered:

“Aye! Rockview, it is; a strange idea, that of planting a house so high up above the trees and the country around. Now, if it had been me as had the building of that ar’ house, I’d put it down here under the trees where they’d have sheltered it from the sun. But there’s no accounting for tastes; and then the Judge was so queer in his notions any way. He hated shade ’cause he’d got a notion ’twas unhealthy. I think it is myself in the winter-time. But there’s one thing sure. By putting that house high up on the rocks, he always got a breeze in hot weather. But didn’t it blow cold, though, up there in the winter? It’s hard climbing up to it from these gardens for an old thing like me, and yet when you’re once up there, ain’t the river view great! It is that. I wouldn’t like to lose that—no, sir! How I do wish Mister Clarence was back here—poor boy! I’ve no more idea he ain’t the Judge’s son than I have that the sun’s cheese. Why, jest look at it—face and walk, and everything. He’s the Judge all over. Pooh! you needn’t tell me none of your trash. He’s the Judge’s son, and he oughter be here. My goodness alive! what’s a comin’? If there ain’t Mister Clarence himself.”

A young man in iron-grey was advancing rapidly up the gardens with his arms laden with bunches of grapes and yellow pears. The moment he caught sight of the old domestic he uttered a shout that made the welkin ring. Then he let the fruit drop, and ran towards her, shouting:

“Hurrah! you old queen of the kitchen! Are you glad to see me? Say! one more yell just to clear my lungs, and then I’ll talk to you. Ho! ho! ho! Rockview! ho! ho!”

The wild shout of exultation was echoed back from the

mountain behind the house. Then he dashed up to the astounded servant, and clasping both arms about her, made her dance round on the avenue, as he said wildly and half out of breath:

"I'm going crazy. Why don't you talk, I say; why don't you talk?" As if any human being hugged in that manner by a young giant, and danced around on the tips of her aged toes, could even approximate to a talk. Her sun-bonnet was danced off before he let her drop. Then catching hold of both her hands, he looked in her face and laughed a loud, merry, ringing, exultant laugh of joy. She was satisfied he had lost his reason. She looked the picture of dismay, with her hair half-shaken down from its fastenings and her sun-bonnet under her feet. Rutherford stooped and picked up the bonnet and placed it on her head quickly; but he put it on the wrong way so that she could not see. Discovering his mistake, he removed it again, and stood with it in his hand waiting for her to arrange her disordered hair.

"Mister Clarence, are you crazy?"

"Perfectly and hopelessly insane," was the response. "You shall be the cook of a crazy master. Have you heard the news, Hannah? Have you heard the news? Why didn't you come down to me at the gate? I expected you to be there looking out for me. Here I come back to claim my old home, and not a human turns out to greet me. The old cook skulks under the trees, and nothing says to me eat, eat, except the pears and the grapes. What's the matter with you? Why don't you speak? I shall go crazy, sure enough, if something don't speak. Have you heard the news?"

The old woman took her sun-bonnet from his hand, and said, half-bewildered as she looked at his happy face:

"What can an old, out-of-the-way thing like me hear? What do you mean, Mister Clarence, by scaring me so?"

"I mean that I'm lord and master of Rockview. Judge Holden was my father and his wife wasn't my mother—that's

what I mean ; and I've got a grandmother, and she's coming here to-day to keep house for me, and her name's Nora Rudd, and she's a sister of old Baltimore at 'The Glen,' the one that married Grace Traver, and she's my mother's mother ; and I've got kin and a name and lots of money, and you're going to be my cook, and I'm going to stir up things generally. Why don't you laugh and shout like me ? You're going to have a good time like everybody else on these premises. I'm the owner sure enough, like you told me yourself over and over again. Now yell, I tell you. If you don't I'll choke one out of you. One good yell for joy."

Catching her around the neck, he continued : " Now yell just as loud as you can, or you'll never have another chance."

" I will, I will, Mister Clarence ; only let go of me !"

" No, not till you yell at the top of your lungs. Out with it now—now !"

The old woman uttered a screech like a witch in a fire.

" That's splendid—that's music ! Now here's a ten-dollar gold-piece to buy you a new gown. Oh ! I'm so glad to see you at Rockview once more. Come on, take me up to the house—up—up—away we go !"

He darted away up the terraces, leaving old Hannah standing in bewilderment over the gold coin in her hand. It was real, sure enough, and as the consciousness of her good fortune broke in upon her startled brain, she laughed and cried. But the voice of her master shouted down to her from the terraces :

" Why in the devil don't you hurry up here with the keys ?"

" I'm coming, you wild hare, you," muttered the old woman ; and thrusting her gold piece into her pocket, after one more glance at it, she toiled up the stone steps after him, puffing and blowing, and muttering :

" He's the same wild devil, and impatient as ever he was. Oh, mercy ! but I'm upset altogether. And yet I always said so ; I always *did* say so. But who's his mother ?

That's what I wants to know. Nora Rudd! Gracious kingdoms alive! how on airth did she git to be Clarence Holden's grandmother? Yes, Mr. Clarence! I'm a-coming—don't yell so—I'm a-coming just as fast as ever I can!"

In a few minutes she stood upon the rock plateau of Rockview beside Rutherford, who was waving his hat at the river view which had burst upon his excited vision. It was the glorious perspective which had astonished the eyes of his infancy. Home again! The familiar view of his childhood spread out before him; the same onward sweep of the great river; the same mountains, in their hazy, purple veils; the same sea of autumn foliage beneath him; the same white sails of the vessels, glistening like wings as they moved in the sunlight towards the passes of the highlands. And there, away off towards the noontide sun, the frowning brow of Stormcliff—the temptation mountain of his despair, the pulpit of his rescued soul—there had the astonished jailor seen the prediction verified, as he ascended to the cupola of the prison and pointed his telescope at a small white object waving from the cliff. There had the outcast struggled and wrestled with God for the power which chains and leads captive the souls of men. The victory had been won, the palm had been accorded; and in the full tide of success, the mystery of his birth had rolled away and vanished like the river mists, as they float upwards past the brow of Stormcliff.

Eagerly he took the keys from the servant and opened his way through the house. Everything was as it had been when he was driven forth friendless and poor upon the world. Every object with which his youthful memory had been associated, every book, every picture which had been his own especial property for years, was in its old place. Nothing had been removed from Rockview except the old clock which had been his companion in exile. There he found the portrait of his father and the likeness of her whom he had been taught to regard as his mother. He knew now that the

lady of the locket was his mother's sister, and that the late Mrs. Holden, whose face looked at him from the wall, was only his reputed mother. Everything connected with his parentage seemed so strange to him, as he wandered up and down his ancestral halls with the keys of ownership in his hands, that he ceased at length to speak with the old servant who followed him, and dropping upon a sofa, buried his face in his hands, and reflected long and earnestly. The old woman seeing him so absorbed, wandered off and left him alone.

While Rutherford dreams, the reader may gain admittance to his silent brain by the perusal of a letter which was handed to Mrs. Grace Baltimore by one of her servants at "The Glen." The domestic informed her that Nora Rudd had suddenly taken her departure, and had requested that the letter be delivered only after she had passed the porter's gate. The young widow, upon breaking the seal, discovered the solution of the mystery in the following lines, in the handwriting of the old nurse :

"Farewell, my darling!—farewell! I leave you with tears in these aged eyes, for love like mine for you is seldom known on this side of the grave; for it is a love which has trampled down pride to make you happy. I am not far from my journey's end. I should think of nothing now but prayer and preparation for the passage of the dark valley. And yet, strange as it may appear in one so aged and so conscious of her numbered days, I am possessed of all the pride and lofty feeling which appertain to a member of an ancient family. Oh, Grace, my darling! the name of Baltimore is rich in associations with pomp and power, ability and prowess. Unknown and unsuspected, I might have lived with you till my death. To be near your dear form, to cheer your lonely hours, and to share your confidence and love, seemed too much happiness to me, the old and unknown nurse of the highlands. When you wrote that letter to me from abroad

and opened your arms to your old nurse, I kneeled down and entreated God to soften the pride of my heart, that I might respond to your offer and struggle to render you happy. You have been to me a younger sister in kindness, and still you were unconscious that you had become my sister by marriage. This unconsciousness enabled me to stifle pride, and to live in the halls of my ancestors as a dependant upon your bounty. But I loved you so, my darling, and the sweetness of stealing glances over the meadows and woodlands of my girlhood's home was such a dear temptation, that I consented day by day to live on under the dear old trees, and to be lulled asleep at night by the music of the waterfall which had sung to me in childhood. Beside that waterfall my magnificent, my loving mother, Gertrude Baltimore, taught me the lesson of family pride; and like her, I gloried in the race from which I sprang. But when the struggle came between my pride and love—when I forgot my mother's teachings to follow the fate of a man beneath me, but beneath me only in family consequence, my tears were mingled with the dashings of that waterfall. The woman's heart triumphed; and I fled away with him—with him whose name I now bear.

“So young was I when I defied the will of my mother, and became the wife of a man whom she would never recognise as her son, that when I returned, long, long years afterwards, no one knew me. Misfortune pursued my wedded life. My husband became very poor; and in the great city I struggled hard for bread. My daughter was beautiful; and in walking one day upon a crowded thoroughfare she attracted the notice of a lawyer, who afterwards attained distinction in his profession. This gentleman pursued his inquiries concerning her, and finally succeeded in forming an acquaintance with her, and won her heart. They were secretly married at the house of an acquaintance of my daughter. The only witnesses who could testify to the marriage-contract, shortly after the ceremony was performed, crossed

the seas and were heard of no more. After long years of waiting and watching for these witnesses to return—after countless letters written to every quarter of the civilized earth, I am finally relieved of my anxiety by the sudden appearance of a sail-maker and his family in this country, who testify fully to my daughter's legal marriage. The legitimacy of my grandson is, to my exceeding great joy, at last established. That grandson is Clarence Holden, whom you know as Clarence Rutherford; and his father is Judge Holden, of this county, not long deceased. Before Clarence was born, my daughter, through religious excitement, became insane, and was removed to an asylum. Report was carried to Judge Holden that she was dead, and immediately he married again. My daughter died in giving birth to Clarence, and I at once brought the infant to this county to present to his father, the Judge. To my horror I found that Judge Holden was married to another lady; and upon the very night of my arrival this estimable woman was delivered of a son. The Judge was absent from home, but upon my stating that I had been a nurse in families for several years, this lady employed me to attend her. Her child died before morning; and while she was sleeping from the effect of narcotics. I sat beside the living and the dead for a long time, in earnest study of the strange situation in which I found myself. I had no witnesses to prove my daughter's marriage or to confirm my statements. The evidence to establish my grandson's claims upon the judge was, under the most hopeful view of the matter, beyond my reach. The witnesses might never return; they might be dead. Before me was sleeping a lovely woman, whose life would be rendered utterly wretched by the announcement that she had married another woman's husband. She was innocent; and I earnestly hoped the Judge had also some excuse for his strange neglect of my child, after he knew that she had been conveyed to a lunatic asylum. Why not substitute my infant grandson for the dead child,

until such time as the witnesses of my daughter's marriage should return? This question agitated me as I sat in the silent chamber, between the living mother and the dead child. The exchange would never be known; and should difficulty finally arise in establishing my grandson's claim before a legal tribunal, the matter might remain for ever hushed, and the child would inherit the property of Judge Holden as the acknowledged offspring of his supposed legal marriage with the lady who was sleeping beside me. After a careful examination of the situation, I determined to make the substitution. The house was silent as the grave; and taking the dead child in my arms I stole noiselessly out into the garden and buried the infant in a little box, and levelled the grave to enable the passing feet of persons on the walk to harden it like the rest of the path. Then I hurried on to the tavern where I had left my grandchild in care of a woman who was a transient guest, and arousing her from her sleep, thanked her for her kindness, and returned with my little charge to the unconscious lady in the chamber. I placed the infant on the sofa; and when she awaked from her sleep, she believed she was looking upon the face of her own child. She died in that belief, for my witnesses appeared to be lost for ever, and I deemed it unwise to avow the exchange. When Judge Holden returned he expressed his satisfaction at seeing me in attendance upon his wife and child, and advised me to remain as a nurse in the county. He had never known of my relationship to the Baltimore family, and as I was an outcast I cared not to avow it myself. I discovered that he had married upon misrepresentations respecting the death of his lunatic wife. He believed that his first wife was of low origin; and as I desired to remain near my grandson in the county and unknown, I consented at his request to remain silent, and never opened my lips regarding his secret marriage to my daughter. I was fearful of the eventual failure of my witnesses. The Judge often supplied my wants when I was reduced by sickness, and remained my friend

up to the time of his death. What was my amazement to learn that Clarence was disinherited by his will, and that a suspicion of exchange of children existed in his mind. How this suspicion became fastened upon him I cannot conceive. When I discovered that my grandchild was an outcast, I commenced immediately more vigorous efforts than ever before to trace out, by the medium of letters, the whereabouts of the sail-maker's family. One of my letters at last reached them. They returned; and upon application to the person to whom the Judge had conveyed his property in trust, I found that he was honest enough to admit the weight of my proofs, and he has placed the entire property of Judge Holden at my grandson's disposal.

“When I first arrived in the city of New York, after my own secret marriage, I recollected that my mother had sent, months before, to the city an old family clock of the Baltimores to be repaired. She had always given me to understand that she intended it to be my property upon my marriage. I proceeded at once to the shop of the clockmaker, who knew me, and claiming the clock, caused it to be removed to my husband's little home. During my sojourn at the residence of Judge Holden, in attendance upon his wife and infant child, I deemed it advisable to place the venerable relic of the past in a situation where it would be appreciated for its quaint old beauty, and where it could always be subject to the claim of my grandson. I caused a letter to be sent to the Judge, accompanied by the clock. It purported to be a present to the young heir of Rockview from an anonymous friend. Judge Holden was much mystified at the arrival of this enormous gift, but he never succeeded in tracing out the donor. I suppose my mother inquired, before her death, for the clock in New York, and ascertaining that I had removed it, was unwilling to approach my lowly home to reclaim it. Upon one of my visits to the city, in attendance upon Judge Holden's wife, I took the little boy Clarence to see my second daughter, Constance, who was a

few years younger than his mother, and resembled her strongly. An artist painted a miniature of Constance holding the little Clarence in her lap. I concealed that picture upon my return to the country in the works of the old clock, at the residence of the Judge. In those works Clarence found it, and has often exhibited it to me in wonder and inquiry. Poor boy, he has the heart of a woman and the will of an emperor. He has won a name and position under obstacles which would have crushed most men of keenly sensitive natures; and now fortune has been added to his self-made triumph. I go in duty to live and die for him. I am proud of the young giant of the highlands. The Baltimore blood courses his veins. That blood sometimes impels to unwise and inconsiderate acts—to revenge, even—but to dishonor, *never*. I shall live and die with him.

“But I leave you, Grace—my baby—with anguish. You are so sweet and noble, and still so lonely in life. I cannot remain with you, because the flight of secrecy has unveiled my Baltimore pride. Love God and keep His commandments; and remember the proud, foolish old woman who loved you so that she lingered beside you as a dependant in the halls of her ancestors—who first hid her mother’s portrait, and afterwards caused it to be painted in false colors, that you might not recognise the resemblance to the daughter who was your old nurse. Go to my deserted room, Grace, and in a vial behind a clock you will find a fluid which will wash away the false eyes of Gertrude Baltimore, and then you will discover how much that proud woman resembled me. God bless you, my baby, and give you that peace which the world can never give or take away. Hereafter I shall meet you as my equal, but with the same yearning tenderness as of old. My feet and my heart reluctantly leave ‘The Glen,’ but pride and duty have been ever the choice of the Baltimores. God keep you ever!

“NORA.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

GRACE BALTIMORE possessed within herself great resources for enjoyment. When the human idols of her existence had proved unworthy of her regard, or had, at the beck of fate, passed away from the vision of her daily life, she was not destitute of objects which could chain her admiration or her appreciation. The reserve of her father had not softened in her regard. Indeed, so conscious had he become of the restraint which always attended his daughter's interviews with him, that he gradually neglected her, and his visits to "The Glen" became in time like angel visits, few and far between. He liked not to face those clear, honest eyes, which seemed always to be demanding explanations of the evasive remarks he had employed at that last attempt at confidence. He knew it was impossible ever to explain her untimely marriage and still retain her respect. He knew that his daughter's consciousness was now perfectly developed. That her womanly perceptions were clear, and that she was looking back with wonder at the early sacrifice of herself which he had permitted—nay more, demanded. He knew her heart was yearning for love, but that her pride would never allow her to seek it from him when mutual confidence was wanting. Her developed beauty of person and intellect none could appreciate more than himself. His natural refinement of taste and heart would have impelled him to take her in his arms, love her devotedly, and make her the companion of his intellect and his studies. But, alas! sin destroys even the intensity of parental affection, and the consciousness of his daughter's integrity and purity made him feel uneasy and dissatisfied in her presence. He lived now almost entirely alone in his gloomy home, as he did before her return from abroad. He had failed to entangle Miss Angier in his snare, and her cool, scornful, contemptuous manner made his visits of ceremony at "The Glen" exceedingly disagreeable. For-

tune had favored Nicholas Traver in regard to the lunatic lady who had gained possession of the secret agreement. He had instituted a search for her, and succeeded in securing her person and the document also. She had escaped from the old gardener's custody on the night of the masquerade; and after the surprise of Nicholas Traver in the garden, she had wandered up and down the country until his agents discovered her and sent her off again to the asylum. He regained possession of the agreement and destroyed it. The evil ones of the earth have their limit of success, and his day of perfect retribution had not yet arrived.

Mrs. Baltimore's loss of her friend and companion, the old nurse, overwhelmed her for a time; but as the autumn days wore away, she contrived to find much consolation in the reflection that the old lady had gone to be the comfort and assistant of the brilliant and lonely being who was the star of her own secret adoration. *He* would derive benefit from her loss. That was a precious thought. It was the satisfaction of a true woman's love. How willingly would she relinquish any society which could comfort and cheer him. Was he not sad and weary of life? Had he not suffered the agonies of shame and contempt? Was he not still brooding over her supposed rejection of his love? Were not natures like his more keenly susceptible to the desolation and despair of unreciprocated love? She felt that this was true, and still was there no way to rectify the mistake. A woman's love must smoulder and inward burn until the man declares his passion to her alone. She cannot move, she cannot speak in the interest of her heart, and the world, conventionalism states the unsatisfactory reason: "She is a woman." The fact of his love was written in characters of fire upon her consciousness. But what availed it? Alas! why did she not, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, exert her powerful will—make one of those earnest sacrifices of herself which made her so brilliant in times of public calamity, and stamped upon her brow the verdict of

hearts, "heroine?" Because, and only because, love makes the bold heart timid, gentle, fearful. There was a slumbering fire in that woman's heart which, under the influence of one single word of love from her idol, would have burst forth to life. She would have given the one happy gaze into his eyes, and then flung herself in utter abandonment upon his heart. It would have been a love worth possessing—that devotion of a high-born soul. Two such natures blending are the realization of the ideal, the glimpse of the celestial city, the fact of eternity. Both honored God, and both were honored of men. Why did the two remain apart? Why, in the counsels of Heaven, was this mistake allowed to exist? There are eyes that will read this question, and the memory it will recall will fill those eyes with tears, and something will press upon the heart with a faint, weary sensation that death is not so painful as early youth imagines, and the aspiration will go up towards the blue sky, "*There, up there, it will all be made right.*" These intense emotions are given to us by the Creator for some wise purpose. He makes the human heart to love one being better, and with more absorbing passion than any other. He causes that heart to turn back to the one image ever, with the constancy of the child for its one mother. No form so precious, no eye so dazzling, no musical voice so sweet as that. Had not that misunderstanding arisen—that word been so strangely misconstrued—that letter so mysteriously lost—that intermeddling friend so inconsiderate, how transcendently happy and beautiful would our mutual love and life have been! This is the secret meditation—the silent pang of many a heart. Ah! why did we not break through every barrier of modesty and custom when we felt that we were loved? We should have been most certainly received and pressed tightly to an agonized and lonely heart. And now it is too late. We are parted for Time. Our hope is in Eternity.

Grace Baltimore did not speak. He had fled away from her home and her hospitality in chagrin and despair; and the

proud, loving woman, with a gasp of mortal agony, fell on her knees and whispered to God that she was now indeed alone. She prayed for strength to live alone and to die alone, to accomplish her duty alone, and to cling to the promises of God and suffer alone. Kate Angier noticed that the young widow seemed to draw closer to her, to appreciate her qualities better, and to modulate her voice to a sweeter strain of endearment than she had ever done before. She felt that her companionship was more necessary to Grace, but she did not conjecture why. The arrow was buried deep, and the wound was carefully concealed from her. She only saw that the buds of taste and power in Mrs. Baltimore's brain were rapidly developing now; that she was finding beauty, hidden meanings, harmonies, hopes, God, in every leaf and every floating cloud. Music was in greater demand, poetry a more frequent guest of their intercourse, and the contemplation of nature a more constant study. The mistress of "The Glen" was becoming more devoted to the sublime poetry of the Scriptures. She struck a new chord of enthusiasm in her friend's intellect when her voice repeated the prophecies of Isaiah, or murmured in the gentle accents of the Teacher of Galilee. On the stairway of nature and love her soul was mounting upwards to God, and on every landing of the ascent she was uttering secret prayers for the noble one who dreamed of her at Rockview. She heard of the young orator often. He was strenuously pursuing his calling; and the impression was gaining ground that he was irresistible before any jury, and a respectable power before any bench of judges. His voice was gaining power and compass from continual practice, and his eloquent phrases were becoming household words. There were no more slurs upon his character, no more omissions of his name from society's list of invitations. Success and wealth soften and gild the tongues of the slanderous. He was universally admired and courted now, and his grandmother, the prophetess, shared his popularity.

But in the great soul of Mrs. Baltimore a new sensation

was destined to be born. An emotion, often deemed of men the attribute solely of weak and inferior minds, but in the judgment of many the necessary concomitant of true love, was to fill her heart. The town was to receive a new sensation. A new heroine was advancing; a martyr was approaching; and her pale brows were encircled by a wreath so exquisitely beautiful, that when men looked upon it they shed tears and recalled the sublime sacrifices of the past ages. She was coming at the proper moment, too. The orator of the highlands was nearing the summit of universal popularity. He was the favorite of the majority, and soon, no doubt, he would gather to his control the majority of his opponents. He was near that pinnacle of fame where men pass from the throne of respect up to the throne of love. The world was beginning to learn that the orator was struggling upwards less for love of fame than for love of truth. But the martyr was coming; and while the very hills themselves were echoing the praise of power and noble effort on the part of Judge Holden's son, the music of the sublime and the beautiful was faintly rising from the distance.

The owner of Rockview was seated one morning in the library of his lofty home, in consultation with his friend the Rev. Charles Heron. The intimacy established under the clouds of shame and reproach had ripened into an indissoluble love long before the sun of success had arisen. To the faithful and consistent servant of Christ was Clarence Holden indebted for the encouragement which had sustained him after Nora had intervened between him and the angel of death. The outcast had been persuaded to occupy a seat in the clergyman's pew, while Marie still remained to listen to her father's preaching. Time and success had removed the strangeness of his position in that pew. He was respected and honored, devout and constant in attendance at the house of God. Eyes which had stolen glances of commiseration or surprise at the clergyman's *protégé* had learned to change their expression during the progress of divine service. He

had passed through the successive stages of reproach, toleration, respect, honor; and now he took his seat there as one whom ambitious mothers or speculative politicians contemplated as an advantageous match for their daughters. The orator, the wit, the author, the heir, had become a power in the town which had trampled upon him. There had been no change in him as regarded his integrity, his sincerity, or his real character. Society had forgotten Jesus when they looked coldly upon the unfortunate young man. But he had learned to respect religion in the person of Nora and the clergyman; he had imitated them and turned to God. Instead of becoming a suicide or a reprobate, as the cruelty or thoughtlessness of church members had tended to make him, he had arisen a star upon society. That star had been marked upon the great book of the recording angel to the credit of old Nora and the Rev. Charles Heron. "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

When Marie had fled, the young lawyer had been the first to approach the clergyman and offer his services to track her out and rescue her from her mysterious fate. Finding that silence was demanded of him, and silence only, he drew nearer to the clergyman in sympathy and attention; and sacrificing comfort and ambition often, he endeavored by his society and congenial literary intercourse to alleviate the distress of the deserted father. His efforts were appreciated; and in time there were few interests in life which were not shared by the two. The first man at Rockview after the restoration was the clergyman, the first warm grasp of the hand was his, the first ardent tears of joy and sympathy were his.

The reverend gentleman had come on the present occasion at the solicitation of Judge Holden's son, to confer with him as to the propriety and expediency of accepting a nomination

to the Congress of the nation, which many friends of the lawyer were determined upon securing for him. Clarence Holden's eloquence and integrity were required at the Capitol. The clergyman had insisted upon the lawyer's acceptance with vehemence, and the orator had finally acquiesced in his views. While the subject was still under consideration a servant had been standing behind his master's chair, awaiting a pause to interrupt the discussion and present a letter to the clergyman. A favorable opportunity occurred, and the missive was delivered with these words :

"The clerk at the post-office, sir, sent this letter by a messenger. He knew the handwriting, and thought you would like to have it right away."

The father's countenance changed to a deathly pallor as he recognised the handwriting of his child.

"Oh ! Marie, my lost Marie ! God, my Father, has answered my prayer. Oh ! Clarence, this is from my darling child."

He tore the letter open and read eagerly, silently. The lawyer watched every change in his countenance. Joy, surprise, tenderness, followed each other as he read, and the young man wondered when he would reach the end. Emotion, intense emotion, was thrilling his own heart. Could he ever forget the beautiful, graceful girl, who had stood by his side when the storm of prejudice was raging—when he was an outcast ? Could he ever forget the trembling, timid angel of charity who had appeared to him as he was stretched upon his lonely couch in the grasp of the fearful cholera ? No ! If one quality of heart was uppermost in the organization of "Golden-Lip," it was gratitude. . Where was this lovely daughter of song wandering ? Where was the fawn-foot treading ? Where was the refined tone and the ardent spirit warming the hearts of her listeners ? She might have misjudged ; but she never had sinned for love's sake. He knew this always, and stoutly maintained it in her defence, when society speculated upon her disappearance. How tender had been her appreciation and friendship for himself !

How like a dream of poetry had she hovered upon his consciousness! How ardent her poetie soul! how soothing her presence! Why did not her father divulge the contents of the letter to him, who esteemed them both so highly? Strange passions were flitting across the reader's countenance. He was nearing the end. It was reached at last, and the letter was crushed in his hand. He looked up at the lawyer. Oh! that look.

"She has saved you, Clarence! my glorious child has saved you."

"Where is she? What can you mean?" exclaimed the listener, rising eagerly from his seat.

"She is in the State Prison," was the trembling reply. "Dear, noble girl! she has fulfilled her idea of atonement. She has sacrificed all that was dear to her on earth, that you might be saved and honored. She has become a felon to shield you. The gentle and the high-bred has chosen a convict's chain that you might breathe the pure air untrammelled; that your genius might expand and bless your fellow-men. Oh! such a sacrifice. Oh! the glory and the honor of being that girl's father."

He bowed his head and wept long, convulsively. Then he arose, and placing his hands upon the shoulders of the young athlete who stood before him in bewilderment, he said:

"You are a noble young man. God has high destinies in store for you, as He permits and ordains that the young and the beautiful shall appreciate, and sacrifice, and suffer for you. Sit down now beside me, and listen to this letter. You may as well know its contents at once. The world will trumpet it—my friends will rejoice that a father's heart and pride are comforted by the return of a daughter in honor. Sit down and listen. She loved and honored you; and I do not wonder, for I love and honor you too."

The lawyer resumed his seat and listened in amazement to these lines:

“MY PRECIOUS FATHER:

“Your Marie is coming back to your arms. Will you receive me in forgiveness for my desertion? I know that my sacrifice is now complete, and no harm can ever come nigh Mr. Rutherford. He is ascending higher and still higher towards the temple; and it is so sweet to realize that I have aided and saved him. Oh! how his enemies hovered about his path to ruin and destroy him; and Fate with her cruel eye gave them countenance; they would have triumphed then. The frenzy of political hate and power would have convicted him, and the convict's irons would have penetrated to his heart, and the eagle of the highlands would have perished in despair. Oh! will you forgive your Marie for trying to imitate her father? Did you not say, ‘Marie, we must make a sacrifice for God?’ What more earnest a sacrifice than to save an innocent man from shame; to avert the accumulated wrongs which would crush and destroy for ever a bright intellect? I knew he was innocent; Mr. Traver knew he was innocent. But he declared to me that Rutherford would be lost unless the man in the grey clothes was secured and convicted; that only could save him.

“Oh! my father, listen to me and forgive me. A woman cannot aid her race as her heart prompts. She cannot contend in the councils of men; she cannot render practical her aspirations by the aid of oratory and the arts which govern minds. But she can sacrifice and suffer for those to whom God has given the power of swaying intellect. And thus I determined to save Mr. Rutherford, that his sincerity and love for truth might remain as a blessing for my country.

“There was an artist visiting at ‘The Glen.’ Our tastes and sympathies regarding art were congenial. He admired my sketches, and praised them. He admitted me to the secrets of his coloring. He even explained to me a mystery of coloring and disguising real flesh which he had learned during his travels in the East. I learned to make a com-

bination of chemicals which produces a wash for the face effecting a perfect disguise. This coloring will not wear off for months. Water will not affect it, and a knowledge of another chemical combination is required to remove it from the skin. I resolved to employ this knowledge to avert Mr. Rutherford's fate. Oh! how my heart trembled at first. But I grew bolder and stronger, the nearer the day of trial approached. It seemed to me that I could thus be worthy of you and your character for sacrifice. It seemed to me that Mr. Rutherford's imprisonment for years would break my heart. I carefully prepared my materials for accomplishing the disguise. Every day I secured some article of men's wearing apparel and secreted it. At last my arrangements were completed, and I desired Mr. Traver to drive me to the town. He left me at the dry-goods store, and after making a few trifling purchases, I hastened off to the vacant building where I had secreted my male apparel. I arrayed myself in this, and cut my hair short like a man. Then I found, upon looking into my little mirror, that I was a bronzed, hardened-looking young culprit; my face and neck and hands were bronzed utterly beyond recognition. Then I hid my own garments, and wandering forth, I disguised my voice as best I could, and inquired my way to a magistrate's office. I declared myself to have been one of the two men who robbed the bank. I gave the name of the other robber as a sailor who had enticed me into the plunder of the money and bonds. I was taken for a young sailor myself, who was penitent and sought for mercy; I declared that I had dropped the money as I ran past Mr. Rutherford, and that he was entirely innocent. My testimony was deemed sufficient, and on the opening of the court, I was conducted before it, and on my own confession and statements I was found guilty. Oh! how happy I was when I was pronounced guilty and ordered off to prison. I felt that Mr. Rutherford was saved. That he would have time at least to clear himself when the prejudices of the day should have been forgotten. When

I reached the State Prison, I had a vial of the coloring fluid concealed about me, which I contrived to retain possession of, to be prepared for any indication of my disguise wearing off. I knew that prisoners of skill and chemical knowledge were sometimes employed in the apothecary's department of the prison. I had heard so, at all events; and I conversed in such a way that I was assigned to that department. But oh! how weary, how horrible, has been my confinement. The bright star of my gloomy night was the consciousness that the young orator of my native hills was free and soaring upwards, day by day, to that height which God designed for him. My tears in my cell were for you in your loneliness, my dear father. But I knew when my time had expired you would love and honor your Marie for saving poor Mr. Rutherford. I thought, too, of the Lamb of God, who suffered all things for us, and how little a matter it was for me, who had never been of any use in the world, to suffer a few years of confinement within stone walls to save a noble, struggling child of genius from the cruelty of men. Every word, every counsel you had ever given your Marie, was remembered in this prison, and sometimes the tears which trickled down upon my lips tasted sweet, as if I had indeed secured the favor of God.

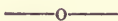
"But oh! my father, how my wild heart bounded with joy when they told me that I was free. A convict was brought here a few days ago who had been guilty of a robbery. He confessed, after he was condemned, that he had assisted also in the plunder of our bank, and exposed his accomplice, and declared that I had never had anything to do with it. The Governor of the State has been here to see me, and he shed tears when he heard my story, and put his hands on my head and tried to speak, but he could not. I know now that I have saved Rutherford; and I am so proud and happy that my poor life has been of service to some one of my race. I know Mr. Rutherford will feel kindly towards poor Marie now as long as he lives. I would still be willing to make

any sacrifice to enable him to win that ideal summit of fame and purity whither his great soul tends.

"I was so patient, dear father, so long as there was any danger for him; but now that I know the world will acquit him, I am impatient to be out again where I can look once more upon the blue sky, and the river, and the hills of my childhood. They tell me I must wait until I am stronger. I am lying now upon my bed, where excitement has flung me; but I know I shall be well when you come for me, and take me home, and forgive me. Your own Marie has not deserted you, but only given a little of her life and youth to the noble and the good. I want you to come for me as soon as you can; and when I am once more in your arms, you will realize how dearly and truly you have ever been worshipped by your little

"MARIE."

"P. S.—I know I shall be stronger and better when you touch me again. It is so hard to live without the presence of those we love. Do not be anxious; I am only weak. I hope I shall be well soon."



CHAPTER XXXIII.

"AND so you were present at their first interview, Annie. Was it in the parlor of the Rector's house?"

This question was addressed to the sewing-girl at "The Glen" by the young widow, as she leaned comfortably back in her arm-chair, with her head resting against its green leather back. She was robed in white, and seemed to enjoy her lounging attitude. The summer sun was blazing fiercely without, but its rays were carefully excluded from the room, save at the narrow space where the shutter was opened to aid the sewing-girl at her work.

"Yes, Mrs. Baltimore, I saw it all. I was making her

winter dresses. Poor thing, she was almost destitute. Nothing would fit her of her old dresses, and I was making up everything new for her. You see she had grown very thin. She was so pale and changed every way, that I'm sure I should never have known her out of her father's house."

"Did he appear to be much affected?" inquired Mrs. Baltimore.

"Oh, yes, ma'am—I never saw such an expression on any man's face. He said nothing but, 'Oh, Miss Heron! oh, Miss Heron!' and then he fell down on his knees, and laying his face on her hand, he covered it with tears. He never spoke another word; but rising up, he walked away to the window where her father was standing, and tried to conceal his emotion, but he couldn't do it. His head struck against the window, and he shook with feeling. He appreciated it all, I assure you. After a while, he came back to her side, and drawing a chair up to her, he sat down and said: 'As long as my life lasts, Miss Heron, everything that bears the mark of my ownership is subject to your demand—property, health, life, services—everything will answer your call. You have saved my fame for this world, but that is the least of all the benefits your sacrifice of yourself has conferred upon me. You have saved something infinitely better for me than a name. For you have saved my immortal soul. That last humiliation of the State Prison would have caused me to seek death by my own hand. I shudder to think of the consequences of my incarceration there,' and then he wept again as if he was a child."

"And what did Miss Heron say?" inquired Mrs. Baltimore.

"She didn't talk much, ma'am—she was too weak; but her blue eyes looked so happy at him, just as if she knew she was a guardian angel who had just saved her ward from the devil—that's the very look she had, ma'am, so sweet, so pure. Oh! I *do* think she is so lovely—don't you?"

"The sweetest blonde I have ever seen," responded the

young widow, heartily. "But is she not changed? Did not her imprisonment affect her beauty?"

"Not according to my taste, ma'am: she is much thinner, but she looks more angelic. I think she will gain her flesh again soon. She has improved, I think, within the last two or three months. But it would be strange indeed if she did not improve when she has such attentions from him."

"He is very devoted to her, is he?"

"I should say so, ma'am. He seems to be always with her. Scarcely a day passes that I do not see him walking with her. They say he is engaged to her; but you know what such stories amount to in the town."

"It would be an eminently proper match," said the widow.

"I think so myself, Mrs. Baltimore. How do you want this trimming put on? They're wearing it up and down, that way, or you can have it crossed so; both ways are worn. Miss Edgefield has one dress made this way, and the other with the trimming crossed. They're both pretty styles, I think."

"I don't fancy either of them. Can't you loop it like Mrs. Conda's dress? I don't fancy Miss Edgefield's taste. If there is a chance in the fashion-plates to adopt a trimming that is ugly, she is sure to select it. Yes; loop it that way. But tell me, does Mr. Holden intend to accompany Miss Heron and her father to Europe this fall? They are going abroad for a year: and I heard that he expected to go with them."

"I know that *he* is not going, Mrs. Baltimore; for I heard him distinctly tell Mr. Heron that his business would prevent."

"Are you positive, Annie?"

"Yes, ma'am, positive. I heard him say that his duty lay here in his State. He is going out on a great electioneering tour for his party before he goes back to Congress. He said his ambition and his duty were here, and he was going to work hard."

"Was Miss Heron present?"

"She was, ma'am; but she didn't utter a word to persuade him, though her father seemed very anxious that Mr. Holden should go."

Mrs. Baltimore took up a book carelessly that lay open on the table, and seemed for several minutes deeply engrossed in its pages. She soon flung it aside, however, and after a reverie of a few seconds, arose suddenly from her chair, and left the room. Passing along the hall of the front building, she met Kate Angier.

"What have you done with Corlear?"

"Left him lounging by the fountain of mermaids while I hunt up my sketch-book to show him. He has visited all the places, and discourses of them like a master."

"Do you like him, Kate?"

"Immensely—no, that term is improper: he thrills me. If you don't interpose, I may love him. Use your position as my elder, and pronounce upon him. May I properly admit his attentions?—always provided that he persists in keeping them up."

"I know of no reason why you should not. He is a gentleman, and I believe he is a man destined to win legal renown. You know he is to argue the great Reynolds case against Mr. Holden."

"Fiddlesticks! what is legal renown in these days when judges buy and sell their decisions like shopkeepers? Tell me something more encouraging about Mr. Corlear than that."

"Well, I will. *He* can't be bought and sold, if judges can."

"That is something, to be sure. I didn't think as deep as that. Good-bye; he is waiting for me. I always thought I should like to write my last name with a capital C. I am splendid on that letter."

"Will you be ready for a horseback ride this evening, Kate?"

"Yes, indeed! I want to try my incorruptible friend on horseback. Where do you propose to go?"

"To a new place—away up in the hills—wild, unknown, and dangerous. Will you go?"

"With all my heart. Good-bye."

Mrs. Baltimore was left alone, and continued on her way till she reached the garden. Finding the sun too disagreeable, she flung her handkerchief over her head, and passed on under the shrubbery. She walked slowly along until she reached the brook of the glen. Turning sharply to her right, she followed the bank of the stream till she came to a little temple built of grey marble. It was situated in the midst of low pines, and was her favorite resort in warm weather. She kept a private journal concealed in one of the fluted columns which supported the roof. Removing the journal from its hiding-place, she sat down in the temple on a pedestal which had yet no statue and reflected for awhile. Then she opened the book and scribbled with a pencil the following:

"TEMPLE GROVE, July 27th.

"Great plans are impracticable—lack vitality, when the heart is burdened. If the Creator intends rapid and prompt action, He will indicate that wish by deafening the roar of memory which comes to my ear like the sea. I felt this morning, when the sun looked at me from the horizon, that it was the eye of my God inquiring the reason of my delay; but now my will is feeble, and I yearn for a coadjutor. Alas! I cannot act alone; the law of my being calls for sympathy. I appreciate fully the perfection of my own plan. The artists all confirm my taste; but when it becomes necessary to pronounce the word of command, 'Begin,' I find myself weary, listless, uncertain. This everlasting roar of the Past will not depart from me. I will hope in spite of myself. I will believe in the constancy of man's love until at least *his* noble form is frozen by the destroyer. He did love me; and it seems to me that his great passions must be

eternal. If he would; if he *could* come back to me, how quickly would my purpose take form and life to itself. He would appreciate with a kingly soul this work of charity. He would give vitality and force to it. But alone—ah! alone, how every purpose wearies and sickens me! After all my sublime readings, all my contemplation of great women, how forced I am at last to admit that I am a woman powerless in the grasp of Love. I study and stimulate myself by great thoughts; and when I fancy myself strongest—equal to any accomplishment—a sudden knock at my heart tells me that I have soared above my destiny, that I have a woman's tenderness; and for one eager, ardent term of endearment, one dear word of love, I would barter my estates, my books, my plans, and become the creature of another's will. And ever the word of my Heavenly Father seems to whisper to me: 'If you would best please *Me*, fulfil a woman's destiny: respond to My purpose in your creation.'

"I do not, I cannot believe Clarence Holden loves her. It would be to my eternal shame to deny the splendor of her character, the intensity of her devotion to him. But what right has she to rob me of all that makes life beautiful? Can she suffer greater loneliness, greater unrest than I do? It seems that in all matters of the heart nature makes us like wolves that selfishly and fiercely grasp, unmindful of our companions. But I cannot pronounce myself superior to this same nature. I can deny myself food, and raiment, and comfort, when it is necessary; but to admit my willingness to relinquish *him* into her keeping, I cannot, I will not make the acknowledgment. He is too dear to me. Oh, that he knew it!

"Write upon my tombstone these words: '*She would have been a great woman had not God given her a heart.*'

"I will try dear Nature in her wildest temple to-day. Perhaps 'He that ordereth all things well' will give me new life in the mountains. The pure, free air of my native hills gives to my physical frame freshness and elasticity. It may

be that it will afford my spirit balm and freshness too. Mould me, O God! to Thine adorable will, that the eternal home may gain me the joy which is denied to my earthly habitation!"

* * * * *

The setting sun lingered behind a wall of clouds of salmon color through which, in spots, a dazzling flame of scarlet fire was visible, which flung upon the scenery of the highlands the startling effect of a great conflagration. The hills and the river shared the red light which issued from these western windows. Even the sails of the vessels exhibited the fiery tinge. High on the side of a mountain, robed in summer foliage, were grouped a party of ladies and gentlemen who had paused in their horseback ride, and from a ledge of rocks in their narrow bridle-path were enjoying the wild vision of the monarch Day yielding up his sceptre. The openings in the wall of clouds were regular, and at intervals; as if they were the handiwork of some great master in architecture, and high above them in the vault of heaven, the wandering patches of cloud were flecked with dashes of scarlet fire. So startling a vision of the power of God might well claim the attention of any human being capable of appreciation; but still the delay required to study it well was hazardous to the safe descent of the mountain-path by the riders. They had followed the guiding will of Mrs. Baltimore, as she urged her snow-white steed up unfrequented and dangerous bridle-paths where constant care and attention were demanded to avoid catastrophes. And the ever-new natural beauties she had conducted them to had served to make them forgetful of the flight of time. But now the more prudent ones urged an immediate descent of the mountain before darkness should have gathered upon the place.

Mrs. Baltimore, after one more lingering glance at the fire-windows, assented to their demand, and wheeling Mirage away from the cliff, commenced the difficult descent. The sure-footed beast slowly but accurately performed his duty,

and after a half-hour's careful riding, the whole party succeeded in reaching the gorge, between two mountains, through which their more level path now led. The shadows of the mountains, however, rendered this path by no means distinct by the time they had reached it, and the riders were obliged to rely partly upon the instinct of their horses to carry them through the forest in safety. They, however, moved along cheerfully conversing, or occasionally breaking forth into a song. Mrs. Baltimore still took the lead, attended by Mr. Charles Delavan. Kate Angier followed with her admirer, Mr. Corlear. The sky above them now rapidly lost all brilliancy of coloring, and presently the young widow looking up, exclaimed:

"It is growing dark too fast; the hour is surely not so late but that we will have time to reach the open country before night-fall."

"I am not so sure of that, Mrs. Baltimore," responded Charles Delavan. "But what in the name of goodness can that mean? Look up there to your right, Mrs. Baltimore!"

The whole party glanced upwards through the trees in the indicated direction, and beheld a cloud of intense blackness sweeping along the sky. It was the precursor of a thunder-storm; and while they looked, the pall was gathering rapidly over the gorge. The dread messenger of the tempest aroused the party at once to the consciousness of their danger. It would soon be too late to escape from the forest. The storm would certainly block up their way with the blackness of ink, Grace Baltimore, with an exclamation of alarm, urged Mirage forward. There was no time to lose in idle regrets. Their love of the sublime had probably entailed upon them a night in the forest under the beatings of a drenching storm. The horses bounded ahead, regardless of the narrow path between the trees, and had just emerged into an opening or glade in the woods, when they encountered a horseman rapidly advancing towards them. He uttered an exclamation of relief when he recognised Mrs. Baltimore.

"Why, my daughter! This is fortunate, indeed, meeting you at this spot. The bridge behind me has just fallen in—the stone bridge at the pass—and there is no time to lose. Turn right back on your course, and try to come out of the woods at the spur of the mountain. Great God! what is that?"

A gleam of intense brilliancy seemed to leap from the mountain above their heads, and immediately followed a report of heavy thunder. Nicholas Traver turned ghastly pale. A thunder-storm immediately upon such a sunset was altogether beyond his calculations, and startling. He recovered himself sufficiently to induce them to reverse their course at once, and spurring his horse past his daughter and her friends, he bade them all follow him and he would bring them out into a clearing in a few minutes. Boldly and splendidly his grey stallion took the lead in the uncertain light. The rest of the party, in single file, flew after him, in imminent peril, apparently, of dashing every minute into some forest tree. Soon there was little to direct the course of the riders except the dashing of hoofs just in front of them, and the occasional shout of their bold leader. Occasionally a steed would diverge a little from the path, and the error was immediately followed by a sweep of branches or twigs violently across the face or form of the rider. No one, however, was unseated; and the horses, given free rein, clung closely to each other, and dashed recklessly on. Presently, Nicholas Traver shouted at the top of his lungs:

"Hold up here!—stop!" And instantly his stallion was flung back upon his haunches, and the foremost rider, a lady, was nearly precipitated over the leader. The party was brought violently to a dead halt.

"There is a diverging path just about here; it leads up over a ledge of rocks. Whether it is the right path for me to take I am uncertain. Wait here till I feel my way up the ascent. I will be able in a few rods to identify the place.

We must rise to our right a little, and I am not quite sure of the locality. This may be the place; wait for me."

A gust of wind which bent the trees swept over the gorge and drowned his voice. But the party heard his horse breaking through the bushes on their right. A wilder rush of the wind passed over them, and a blinding flash of lightning penetrated the forest darkness and shivered a tree between the party and the rider who had left them. When the concussion had left them in bewilderment and darkness, they heard a yell of command given by Nicholas Traver. It was evidently unheeded by the stallion, for immediately the sounds of hoofs pattering and clattering among the rocks above them on the right were heard. Another yell, which appeared to be blended with mortal terror, was followed by a shower of sparks, which scintillated forth into the darkness, and then the rapid beat of the hoofs appeared to follow around the side of the mountain in the impenetrable gloom. Soon the sounds died away, and were replaced by the crash of the lightning which fell again into the forest, and the yells and moans of the storm, which burst over the gorge in intense fury. The riders huddled together in uncertainty and terror, while the rain poured down upon their unsheltered forms in torrents. Mrs. Baltimore, after a moment's silence, exclaimed: "Follow me, and see if we can't find our way out. His horse has run away with him, and will likely come out at the end of the mountain spur."

There was no choice left for them, and they walked their horses slowly after her in the darkness. In a few minutes—so few, that it seemed like a special mark of God's favor—they emerged from the trees into the open country, and into the full blast of the wind, which hurled the rain-torrents before it. At that instant they heard the yell of Nicholas Traver again, and directly in front of them. The stallion was crossing their very path. A bolt of intense brilliancy from the clouds passed near the flying steed, and for an instant horse and rider were visible. Then followed the blood-

curdling cry of terror again; and immediately another bolt from the anger of heaven hurled horse and rider a crushed mass at the feet of Grace Baltimore's Mirage.

In the awful madness and rush of the storm the party huddled about the victim. No sound from the proud, beautiful leader met their ears. No motion, no convulsive struggle, came from the lifeless steed, once so gloriously plunging with fire and spirit, and the admiration of the county. Retribution had come unexpectedly, and the destroyer of innocence had been hurled in God's anger to the mother earth which he had dishonored. Gifted, beautiful, graceful, born almost an ideal image of man, that he might by his conspicuous beauty and splendor with greater effectiveness and power guide mortals in the paths of honor and truth, he was lying now a crushed mass—a monument of the accuracy of the Eternal's word. In vain did the agonized daughter dismount and kneel over him. He had never been to her an upright, true, noble father. Of her own choice she had turned to God; and Nicholas Traver had no part or merit in leading her to the feet of her Lord.

Carry him out. It is better that she, the innocent, should be parted from him. This is the judgment of men. But hark! While the storm is gathering and the messengers of wrath are preparing the bolts of heaven, a controversy has arisen before the great white throne. The Holy of Holies is veiled in ineffable splendor, and before the Mercy-Seat the angels of Justice and Mercy are contending. The incomparable privilege of debate is exercised by the intellects of the immortals. Around the disputants are congregated myriads of ethereal beings, white-winged and beautiful, and eagerly listening.

Angel of Justice.—Thy words, O God! are unchangeable, and Thy wisdom fixed and immovable. Only the pure and the upright can appreciate and enjoy the bliss of Heaven. This man has added impiety and scorn of Thee to his sin, and revelled in the defiance which springs from the intellect.

To blast him before the eyes of his fellows will establish Thy word, and mortals will learn to fear Thee and Thy threatenings. I demand in the interest of Justice that he remain no longer unpunished, and that the angel of the storm smite him to the depths of perdition.

Angel of Mercy.—Spare him, O God of mercy, yet a little longer! The soul most dyed in sin and corruption has often arisen under the beams of Thy mercy to be a star in Thy service. Forget not this, I entreat Thee, and direct the bolts of vengeance to pass him by, that so much beauty of body and mind may be withheld from Satan, and may learn to become one of the jewels in Thy crown of glory. Spare him! oh, spare him a little longer!

Silence remained in the ineffable splendor which wreathed the Great White Throne, and the adoring angels veiled their faces at the majesty of Eternal Thought; and the unceasing harmonies of heaven went on. And lo! a child of exquisite loveliness and winged grace fluttered in between the expectant angels, and kneeled in adoration before the Throne. In her tiny hands was a harp, and in her bosom the beautiful memento of her earth-life—a white lily. And, raising her sweet voice in prayer, she said:

“Little Zoe pleads for his soul in the name which thrills the court of Heaven; in the name of Jesus, whose adorable name shall never be pleaded here in vain.”

A thrill of melody gushed forth upon the silence. The prayer of the child was heard; and, at the edict of God, the angels of Justice and Mercy flew away to attend the Spirit of the gathering storm. When the bolt of vengeance was aimed at the head of the flying horseman, Mercy raised her hand, and the lightning was diverted to his side. Senseless and paralysed for life, he fell to the earth with his blackened steed. He was suffered to live a helpless being, shattered, attended by his daughter, and learning from her lips to lisp the name of Jesus which had saved his soul.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

It was the hour of midnight, and the full moon silvered the edges of the garden shrubbery. Summer was preparing to leave the sceptre to the autumnal king, and the moon seemed bent on offering her most radiant tribute to her warm friend of ripening and rosy memory who was passing away for ever. To a lonely and desolate heart no change comes so seriously as the death of the seasons. The contemplation of their beauties becomes a habit, and as they are passing away, the heart begins to realize a sense of loss: something is leaving us which has contributed to our happiness or temporary contentment. That which is to come will be a stranger; that which is passing away has become familiar; its birds or its skies will be no longer. Such were the meditations of Mrs. Baltimore as she left her helpless invalid father sleeping, and wandered out alone in the garden. So dreamily thinking, so noiselessly walking, was the young widow as she passed along the silent garden, that her presence was undetected by a man who was carefully stealing along a path parallel to the one she was treading. At length his person came in contact with a shrub which hung neglected across his way, and immediately there fell upon her startled ear the twang of a musical chord. She paused at once in surprise, for certainly all the inmates of her house were soundly sleeping by that lone hour. She turned quickly around, and saw the man moving on towards the dwelling. The familiar note of a musical instrument which she loved suggested no thought of fear, and her curiosity prompted her to follow after the intruder on her premises. Who was the strange musician, and what could he be doing so far from the highway at that late hour? Cautiously she moved on after him along the parallel path. He seemed to be unconscious of any human life in the garden, for he held on his way; and presently she saw him pause directly under the window of her sleeping apartment.

She approached him very closely under cover of the shrubbery, and peeping through the leaves of a grape arbor, saw him raise something up to the moonlight. As he turned to look around the garden, she discovered that it was a guitar, and at the same instant the moonbeams revealed his features. She trembled violently at recognising the face of the man who haunted her dreams. *It was Clarence Holden.* No doubt he had come to indulge his fancy and his fine voice in a midnight serenade. She had heard of his efforts in this department of romance before. Could it be within the range of possibilities that he had come to sing to her after all the unfortunate error of the past? Had he forgiven her for refusing him, and was he so much in earnest that he had trampled down his pride, to come again after such a long lapse of time? What, in the name of a trembling and truthful heart, could be the motive of this musical visit from the pride of the county—the noble, upright orator of the highlands?

Eagerly she parted the grape-leaves and watched his movements. He examined the guitar carefully, and then, without touching the chords, laid it down upon the grass under her window. He stood with his arms folded looking up at the moon. She dared not move, she was so close to him. His face was sad, inexpressibly sad. What could he be studying so deeply? He was evidently undecided, for he took up the guitar as if he would play, and then laid it down again upon the grass, and walked back and forth. Some powerful emotion was holding the music in check. Her heart whispered to her that it was pride. “He is a Baltimore—that dreadful pride, that unyielding Baltimore pride is holding him back. Oh, my God! will he go away silently after all.” She pressed her hand upon her palpitating heart. It seemed ready to burst with anguish. If his pride should drive him away now, probably he would never come again. No doubt he had come there under a burning impulse. He was realizing how weak he was to seek again a woman who had rejected him. In a few seconds more, pride would gain

the entire mastery of him, and he would walk away, and her heart would break. How utterly unconscious he was of the eager heart which was burning with passion for him—which was reaching forth to him in agony, yearning to be clasped and pressed to his own.

He stooped suddenly, and raised the guitar from the grass. What would he do this time? Alas! her heart anticipated his movement. He cautiously loosened all the strings, and prepared the instrument to be put away in its case for the night. Break, weary, desolate heart of woman, for pride is stronger than love. The hope which had arisen so suddenly fell like a meteor from heaven. Like the leaf of the dying flower which flutters silently to the earth, did the white-robed figure of Grace Baltimore drop to her knees in prayer to the God who had given her heart its mission on earth. Her lip was quivering, her bosom rising and falling, as she whispered: "I ask of Thee, O my God, to make me submissive to Thy holy will. Though my heart should break, I will trust and praise Thee for ever."

Her head had fallen, with its glorious crown of womanhood, against a bar of the grape arbor, and a faintness as of death overcame her for an instant; and in that instant the wise Ruler of all things put forth His retarding hand to the arrow of fate. Hush! beating heart. A whisper of melody, so faint and exquisite that it might be the music of a dream, breathed forth upon the moonlight. He was calling to her in that subdued melody. It was no twang of the guitar she heard, but a low, sweet harmony—a memory, an old hope, breathed from a sweeter instrument, a heaven-born instrument, a soothing, dreamy flute. It had been his favorite medium of sweet sound in the past. It had been her favorite too; and now he had chosen it to wake the lady of his heart from her sleep. In the past, the dear old past, they had sung that hope in unison. He knew that she would recognise the tune, and trusted a face at the window would reward his melody. The gentle, dreamlike melody quivered

out upon the moonlight—swelling, fainting, dying, and then all was silence again. Raising her head from the grape arbor, she saw that he was silently looking up at her room. No rattle of the shutter—no sound at the window met his ear. She heard a sigh distinct, and to her woman's heart full of rapture. "He loves me yet. I knew it."

He waited a moment longer, and then hearing no sound to encourage him, he commenced to pace back and forth on the grass-plot. Would he be discouraged and discontinue the music? Would he walk away and make no further effort to attract her attention? Her woman's instinct told her that *now* she had a right to recognise the compliment of the music at any time, or in any manner she pleased. She might even acknowledge it by note, if she were so disposed, for he had made advances to her now. But the flute commenced its sweet repinings again, and she bowed her head to listen. Ah! dear, precious memory, how faithful was it now. She recognised the love-song which he had once declared should be his declaration of love whenever his heart should be touched by woman's influence. The flute whispered the love which possessed him, and the true heart concealed behind the grape-leaves filled and trembled with rapture:

'I wake from dreams of thee;
And a spirit in my feet
Has led me, who knows how,
To thy chamber window sweet.

Oh! lift me from the grass,
I die, I faint, I fail:
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.

My cheek is cold and white;
Alas! my heart beats loud and fast:
Oh! press it close to thine again,
Where it must break at last."

The musician paused again and looked up at the window. No recognition came from Mrs. Baltimore's room.

"Am I despised?" he muttered at last, never imagining the possibility of his being overheard at that distance.

"The noble and the true are never despised by a woman," was the startling response behind him.

He looked bewildered at the extraordinary direction from which the sound came. Then he said aloud:

"That is the voice which of all others has power to influence and rule my heart. But whence does it come? Is it an echo from the invisible land?"

Perfect silence followed this inquiry, and he passed around to the rear of the grape arbor. The figure of the young widow arose before him with the majesty and the robe of an angel, the moonlight full in her face, and her dark eyelashes veiling the tears which clung there ready to fall.

"Mrs. Baltimore, I came here to surprise you, and you have given me the greater surprise."

"No," she said earnestly. "You have indeed surprised me more. How could you ask if I despised you? Was our former intercourse no guaranty that *you* never could be held in aught but honor?"

"And yet," he exclaimed, "you were shocked at my avowal in this garden."

"Mr. Holden, you never made an avowal to me in this garden," was the calm response.

"Then I am a dreamer, and unworthy the respect of men of sense; still do I assert that in this garden I told you how dear you were to me; that you had become the light and the hope of my existence, and that I craved a return of my love as the greatest boon I could ever receive in life."

"Mr. Holden, your declaration was made to a mask."

"Aye! and that mask was none other than Mrs. Grace Baltimore," was the firm response.

"It was not Grace Baltimore, Mr. Holden. Had it been

that lady, you would never have neglected, or rather shunned one who has cherished you above all others."

"And why not?"

She made no response, and looked down. Clarence Holden felt a thrill of hope dart through him at her words:

"You mean that you would not have rejected me?"

The single word which came in reply was scarcely audible. But it broke the floodgates of his heart. It was enough. He clasped both arms about her and pressed her to his heart.

"Look up at me, Grace. Do you love me?"

Those dark eyes, so often veiled, so lustrous, so beautiful, obeyed his request; and in them he read the passion of a great woman's love.

"I claim you for my wife, Grace—my own darling one."

A smile of unutterable bliss was the only answer; and her head fell again to the support of his manly breast.

"One more evidence, Grace, and I shall be the happiest man in existence."

She looked up at him in surprise. But it was only love's artifice to secure that passionate kiss which is the offering of a woman's first and only love.

* * * * *

Miss Louise Stanford, from long experience, had attained the reputation of being thoroughly acquainted with the details of family life in all the principal households of the town. The philanthropic motives which induced this aged damsel to familiarize herself with the domestic affairs of her neighbors were denied by many of her contemporaries. But the ill-nature of those who doubted these motives was plainly manifest, from the fact that they were the very first to recognise the importance of her daily bulletin, and never allowed themselves to find fault with her tongue until her bulletin, collected at so much sacrifice of shoe-leather, had been transferred to their own minutes. They always gave her credit for the evil stories told of her neighbors, but were sure to ignore her tales of commendation, collected at great sacri-

fice of time and perseverance. Slander her as they might, the town was under obligations to Miss Stanford for consenting to act as an irregular annalist of families and individuals. Half the pleasure of living in the town would have been destroyed by the loss of the information which she contributed to the common fund.

For instance, she was the first to announce the departure of the Rev. Charles Heron and his daughter to Europe. She was the first to ascertain that Marie was induced to take the trip by her father, who desired her to forget the existence of Clarence Holden. She, too, first announced the details of the bridal wardrobes of Mrs. Grace Holden and Mrs. Kate Corlear, who were married on the same day and by the same clergyman, and went off together on the same bridal tour. The grief of Mr. Charles Delavan at the widow's marriage was also the product of her mental garden. She, too, published the account of the disagreements between old Nora and her grandson's wife, and maintained stoutly that notwithstanding all amicable appearances, the old nurse was nourishing a slumbering fire, which would ere long burst forth into a great family conflagration among the Baltimores. She *knew* it was there, even if the public were unable at present to detect it. She discovered also, in the course of time, that an heir was born to inherit the joint estates of Holden and Baltimore. Its eyes and *mouth* were described with great accuracy to the curious in those matters, though some evil-disposed young man did assert that Miss Stanford was a little too fast in her chronology, and that the Holden baby's mouth was small and delicate. But these apparent discrepancies in the female annalist must be overlooked in consideration of the valuable services rendered to the cause of general information by her researches.

But one interesting fact was distinctly traceable to Miss Louise Stanford's authority. She discovered it first, and of course had a perfect right to embellish it properly for the conversational market. She had ever cherished a firm

conviction that Nora Rudd was in frequent communication with the potentate of the fiery realm. How else could the old lady fall into trances and predict so accurately of the future? Of course the prophets who lived near to God were capable of doing such things, without securing to themselves a reputation of being friends of his caloric majesty; but it was beyond the bounds of all reason that an old lady, who lived in the constant exercise of prayer, and Bible reading, and works of charity, could fall into trances and predict the future, without being either a hypocrite, an illusionist, or a tool of the lower regions. Miss Stanford was satisfied of this fact; and once upon a time she made a discovery which confirmed her orthodox views.

She happened to be passing the neglected house of old Nora one morning, and to her surprise she saw the old lady enter the tenement with a bundle in her arms. What could she do with a bundle in an old vacant dwelling like that? The inquiry was repeated in her mind: it demanded investigation. She walked back and forth at a distance, but keeping her eyes upon the door, where the old lady had gone in. She tarried long in the neighborhood, but the door of the little house remained closed. The shutters had not been opened. All was silent about the premises as the grave. Growing weary at length with walking and standing, she sat down upon a door-step. She remained seated more than an hour. No Nora appeared; no sign of life was manifest about the house. Then arising from the door-step, she rang the bell of the house behind her, and concluded to make a brief visit to an acquaintance, whose sitting-room looked out upon the street. Her friend welcomed her, and in time she contrived to secure a seat near a window which overlooked Nora's little house. The same silence and absence of life was manifest across the street. She informed her friend, finally, that Nora had disappeared through the door with a bundle, and requested that she would keep a look-out for her reappearance, as she deemed the matter very strange. Her

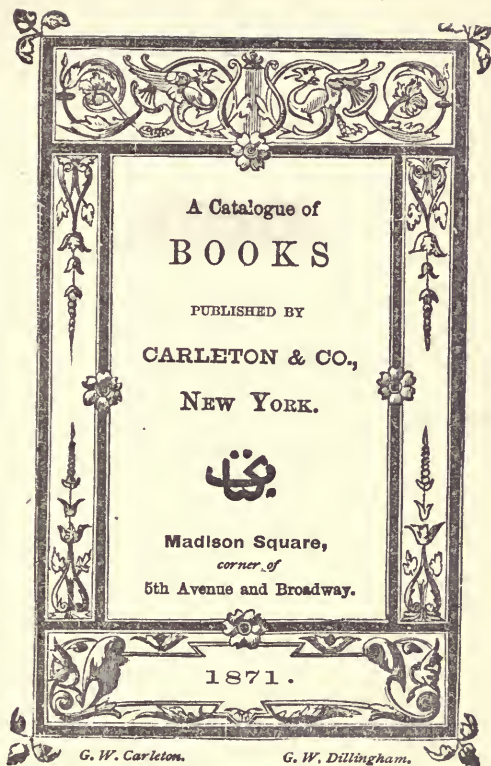
friend promised to aid her in her laudable watch, and when at last Miss Stanford was forced to leave for home by the approach of night, this friend had become as curious regarding Nora's disappearance in the cottage as herself. She promised to sit up all night and keep a starlight watch upon the door. Miss Stanford returned on the ensuing morning, and to her amazement it was reported that Nora had not yet come out of that house. The two watchers were now thoroughly excited, and maintained a vigilant watch the entire day, without their eyes being once rewarded by any sign of life on those premises. They had surely something tangible now to report of Nora's secret consultations with the devil. This little house was no doubt one of the satanic stations while the Prince of darkness was traversing the earth. In a day or two more the whole town was startled by a report that Clarence Holden's grandmother was lost, and no trace of her could be found. Miss Louise Stanford immediately became a lioness. She knew all about it. The old lady had given the devil a reception in the little house, and no doubt the power of the Evil One was holding her still a captive there. Her report gathered a great crowd about the place; and when Clarence Holden made his appearance in great anxiety before the door to burst it in, the excitement was at its height. Upon entering the house, the crowd, to their great disappointment, ascertained that Nora was not there. What had become of her? Miss Stanford made her way to Clarence Holden's side and gave him her facts. He immediately ordered the people out into the street; and locking the door behind him, went along with them to the newspaper office and caused an advertisement to be inserted, offering for the discovery of his grandmother a large reward. He did this as a mere blind, and to draw the crowd away from the house. He suspected where the old lady had gone, and waited his opportunity to follow her up unnoticed.

Days, weeks, months glided by, and still no tidings arrived of the lost nurse. Years rolled on, and the name of Nora

Rudd became a type of mystery, of terror, and of superstition to the dwellers in the highlands. Her life had been replete with strangeness and with accurate prophecies. The general impression regarding her was that she had been spirited away by the devil.

But another class of minds, not so easily diverted from the remembrance of her Christian virtues and her unceasing charity, were disposed to give credence to the story that old Nora received a Christian burial, though at a strange point high among the mountains, where no trees grow and no impediment is offered to the rush of the wild winds as they howl and moan in the winter, or sigh and murmur in the summer-time, over her sleeping dust. A rumor in the highlands has it that the tall dark prophetess sleeps in a tomb hollowed out of the solid rock which hangs threateningly over the Hudson, and at the very spot that she was found dead, kneeling in prayer to God, with her Bible and her steel-pointed staff lying beside her. It is said, too, that the descendants of the Baltimore family have a secret custom, when a male heir is born to their estates, to send him with his nurse by a subterranean way to the very summit of a frowning cliff, and there devote him to the service of the God of Heaven. Then and there, it is said, the spirit of the old prophetess is permitted to whisper in the ears of the child language sublime and beautiful, and which possesses the strange power of filling the soul with grand and glorious images of true greatness. It is said the spirit of oratory is then and there born; and that the mightiest eloquence of the highlands can be traced, through the Baltimore family, to this early dedication to God on the wild and lofty height of Stormcliff.





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